



The Thirst for Knowledge – Audience Data in the Arts

A report for Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council and the
Arts Council of Wales

By **Catalyst Arts**

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0. Executive Summary

This document should be read alongside the executive summary, which gives the background to the study and sets out the conclusions.

This is available to download from www.catalystarts.com or by emailing info@catalystarts.com





1. Consultation Findings: Current Situation and Key Issues

Audience data impacts across the whole of the arts infrastructure from funding bodies to arts organisations. Consultation was undertaken with some eighty five organisations and individuals representing key groups which have a stake in the use of audience data. Interviews were conducted by telephone and in person, and the opportunity was also taken to make presentations at a number of key industry gatherings. With few exceptions the discussions painted a very clear picture of the current situation.

Four key points emerged:

- There is a clear lack of a business planning culture within most arts organisations which manifests itself in a lack of demand for audience data which would otherwise have been needed to inform planning. Conversely, those managers who are keen to have information about audiences often find it difficult to access what they need.
- The biggest lacks were training (both in skills and understanding), and mechanisms for sharing information and knowledge.
- Audience data is frequently pigeon-holed as only relevant to marketing which means that it is not considered useful for any wider tasks such as business planning or programming.
- There is clear frustration, particularly on the part of those who have worked in the arts for some years, that the same problems are encountered by organisations over and over again and that lessons are not learnt. There is a clear need for both existing and past expertise to be drawn upon and shared so that wheels are not being re-invented.

1.1. Arts organisations

1.1.1. Current Situation

The current situation within arts organisations is very varied although there are a number of common strands in terms of their data usage.

- Most organisations with computerised ticketing systems (generally within the performing arts) are collecting data very well – indeed the level of detail that is held about customers and their transactions is much higher than for many comparable businesses outside the arts.
- Those organisations which don't have a computerised system or don't issue tickets find it difficult to collect even basic information about their audiences or participants, and those that do have to rely on relatively complex manual systems of data collection.
- There are few organisations making absolutely no use of data – either deliberately or because of a real lack of understanding. This is a very small proportion of organisations, and there is little actual hostility to the concept.
- Some organisations are not clear exactly *why* that data is being captured and to what use it might be put – they just know it is a 'good thing'. Most organisations with systems are using data in some form or another – even if only for brochure mailings – but fewer are making detailed marketing use of the data
- The demand for change tends to be articulated by people from outside the organisations themselves – consultants and agencies, for example – but some of those organisations currently making good use of data are strong advocates for improvements, because they are most aware of current limitations.

1.1.2. Key Issues

- Despite the availability of data, there are few arts organisations taking full advantage of the information available to them – most are scratching the surface of what could be possible.
- In comparison with similar sized companies in sectors outside the arts, the complexity of data analysis being used in the arts is not especially great.

- Some have actually been put off getting into data because of the level of detail of some high-profile research projects, but most have simply not yet discovered, or been shown, the practical benefits that could flow from greater use of definitive information about their audience.
- Some marketers have found it difficult to persuade their organisation to make any more than tactical use of data. This is often bound up with a misunderstanding of the potential role of marketing within the arts, but it is clearly a factor in explaining why data is not more widely used.

1.2. Arts Councils

1.2.1. Current Situation

- Some of the most sophisticated use of data about audiences has been within the three Arts Councils. The Arts Councils have commissioned major audience data tools such as TGI, nationwide activity and attitudes surveys and data:crunch.
- The Arts Council of Northern Ireland is keen to develop the way information about audiences is collected, stored and analysed and is in the process of developing an Audience Development Agency and collaborative ticketing system. One of the specific aims of that project is to improve the use of audience data, and ACNI is therefore keen to become involved in the follow-up to this scoping study in the medium term.
- Many arts funding bodies outside the UK are also interested in the area of audience information. The Australia Council has done much work in this area, and is very keen to collaborate formally with the UK bodies on suitable projects.

1.2.2. Key Issues

- The Arts Councils gather large amounts of data from arts organisations through annual surveys and reviews of funded projects. However, there is less understanding amongst arts organisations of the uses to which this information is put, and this is compounded by the fact that the Arts Councils are not perceived by many organisations to demonstrate the benefits of their findings (despite the various reports that are in fact published).
- Arts organisations are annoyed when different departments ask for similar information at different times and in different formats. There has been a successful attempt to streamline this in Wales, and there is scope for the other councils to follow suit.
- Despite the Arts Councils commissioning a large amount of research and analysis about audiences, there is a feeling on the ground that there could be more done to demonstrate the relevance of this work to the sector as a whole.
- Indeed, there is significant ignorance of what research has been commissioned (sometimes even within and between the Arts Councils themselves). It would appear that some duplication of effort is occurring.

1.3. Local authorities

1.3.1. Current Situation

- A number of local authorities don't collect information about audiences – either as an exercise for themselves, or from organisations which they fund –and some have failed to see the need for this information.
- Where authorities are interested in audiences it can be difficult for authorities to access the wider information they need. Many authorities have not undertaken their own research but have relied on arts organisation or agencies to provide them with information.
- Some authorities, particularly in England where there is an ever-greater emphasis on performance measurement as part of Best Value, have commissioned Economic Impact Studies which have been underpinned by audience data.



- A project in Essex, which has been a partnership between the two tiers of local authorities and the regional Arts Council England office, has gone a stage further in collecting information directly from arts organisations. It has piloted a system where organisations can submit performance figures via the web which are then delivered directly to the funders. An overall benchmark is also created as each set of data is supplied, against which organisations can measure their performance. The outcome of this pilot is yet to be published, and it will be very important to consider its findings.

1.3.2. Key Issues

- In many cases the information requested by Local Authorities is slightly different from that which is supplied to Arts Councils which has created an unnecessary reporting overhead and a good deal of self-confessed fudging on the part of arts organisations.

1.4. Audience Development Agencies

1.4.1. Current Situation

- Audience Development Agencies across the UK are major consumers and generators of information about arts audiences – they probably have the highest level of involvement on day-to-day basis. Indeed, the report commissioned by the grouping of agencies (NETWORK) advocated a much greater role for audience data, and proposed ways in which the culture might be changed to make the use of data more widespread.
- Agencies have initiated some of the most innovative data analysis projects – MAPEAST in 1993 and the analysis tool data:crunch, for example, were both well ahead of the game at the time.
- By promoting the use of data tools such as mapping amongst client organisations, agencies have helped many people to increase their day-to-day use of data. The impact has been mostly on marketing staff, but there are a number of cases where senior managers have also been exposed to the possibilities by the activities of their local agency.
- Agencies are strongly in agreement with standard protocols and with the need to share knowledge.

1.4.2. Key Issues

- There is clearly a role for agencies to hold specialist knowledge – both about audiences and about data analysis techniques – but there needs to be discussion about whether or how the provision is made equally across the UK.
- Agencies are a vital support mechanism for organisations using audience data, but in some cases it is difficult for them to allocate sufficient time unless this use is part of a funded project.
- There is also an issue about whether having such specialist centres of excellence might have the negative effect of discouraging organisations from building their own capacity to analyse and use audience information. Agencies cannot, and should not, permanently compensate for lack of skills or appreciation of the value of data within organisations. Besides the issues of resources, it is also much more desirable and beneficial for organisations to manage their own use of information, at least at a basic level.

1.5. Consultants

1.5.1. Current Situation

- Alongside audience development agencies, consultants are the people leading the way in the use of data. They generally understand the wider uses of data to generate management information, as well as achieving more specific marketing tasks
- Consultants are keen to see standard protocols about data analysis and use defined, and as a sector would be key to making sure that their use was widespread.



1.5.2. Key Issues

- Organisations using consultants are generally getting clear information about audiences to help in their decision making processes for specific projects. However some can tend to regard data analysis as an *external* task which doesn't form part of their day-to-day operation. Looking at it the other way, it is often easier for consultants to 'parachute in' and undertake data analysis for organisations without leaving any legacy of capacity.
- There is an issue of training for consultants, who tend not to be keen for customers or potential customers to get the idea that there are areas where they need to improve their skills. Because the level of training on offer about data analysis and use is patchy, even those people who have worked with data a lot within organisations may not have a good overview about how it fits in to the wider picture – especially what is happening outside the arts.

1.6. Umbrella Bodies

1.6.1. Current Situation

- The bodies that represent specific sectors of the arts all have some involvement with audience information.
- Many of those bodies are interested in data for both advocacy and benchmarking. The Theatrical Management Association (TMA) and Society of London Theatre (SOLT) have been gathering and analysing high-level audience data for a number of years, and this is seen by many as a major benefit of membership. The analysis is undertaken by City University and there is a high level of response from member organisations in supplying data.
- The British Arts Festivals Association (BAFA) have also recently undertaken major research into Festivals which included information about audiences for the different strands of their work. This study was designed primarily for advocacy but it would not be very difficult for it to become a benchmarking tool.
- The Federation of Scottish Theatres (FST) has run a training session on databases but this pointed out the need for more to be done. They also run a headline data collection survey which has been very useful at tracking trends.
- The Arts Marketing Association (AMA) is very keen to see audience data more and better used. It has discussed the issues at conferences and meetings (including a major Symposium in May 2003), and is keen to speak for marketers on the issue.
- The Marketing Committee of the TMA has also worked towards a greater use and understanding of data – particularly through the various training courses it runs which are regarded as flagships within the sector.
- The touring agency Creu Cymru in Wales has already raised the need for a cohesive approach that involves both programmers and marketers. Groupings such as this are good test-beds for organisation-wide use of audience data.

1.6.2. Key issue

- Whilst umbrella bodies are not fundamental to the process, they do have a role to play, particularly in helping to spread the word.

1.7. Academic organisations

1.7.1. Current Situation

- Those academic institutions that have arts management departments have a dual interest in audience data. Firstly, what is included in taught courses about data, and secondly research interests.
- When looking at what is taught to arts management students, particularly those at undergraduate level, the picture is a somewhat mixed one. Whilst there are a variety of very exciting, challenging courses on cultural planning and management on offer they



are strongly theoretical and academic. This seems to jar with the fact that most of these courses offer placements, and that the majority of students on these courses are seeking professional development and career advancement.

- Those institutions that are involved in research about arts management issues do not appear to be covering data analysis – either as a service to arts organisations, or to increase industry levels of knowledge – in any depth.
- Some universities and colleges, and a number of commercial training providers, are now teaching the Advanced Certificate in Arts Marketing (ACAM) which does include a module on audience information. There is, however, concern about how up to date and useful some of the teaching of that segment might be.

1.7.2. Key Issues

- If these courses are vocational, then there is a serious lack of teaching and focus on data issues. Even if it is considered that there will be a much greater shift towards arts organisations employing managers who have been through these courses in the future, this will not mean an automatic increase in the level of knowledge and understanding about data, particularly beyond the marketing context.

1.8. Box Office System suppliers

1.8.1. Current Situation

- The five biggest ticketing system suppliers across the UK (Tickets.Com, Galathea STS, Synchro, Artifax and ts.com) were consulted.
- Basic data reporting and analysis are available from all systems. but users often perceive that they are not easy to use without some specific training. Most suppliers exhibited real understanding of and interest in the data usage issues of their clients and expressed a real willingness to work closely with the Arts Councils to facilitate the implementation of the new protocols once developed.

1.8.2. Key Issues

- Many suppliers felt that the vast majority of venues are drastically under-utilising their systems and are failing to invest in sufficient training which then puts a heavy support burden on the suppliers themselves, particularly as a considerable numbers of venues lack even quite basic technical competence. Some suppliers also complained that whilst they were responsive to requests for bespoke development, venues did not then proceed to use the new functionality.
- The companies tend see themselves as leading the market rather than following it, particularly with customer relationship management modules. There is clearly a difference of emphasis between suppliers and their customers – many of the latter feel that suppliers understand the systems but not the key processes for which the organisations need to use them.
- The majority of suppliers said that they would be willing in principle to work on producing reports in a common format if there was demand from the market, and if it didn't reduce the competitive advantage of any system.

1.9. DCMS and national governments

One of the key points of discussion at the meetings of the Arts Councils audience development officers was how much to consider the needs of government departments in relation to this study. There are a number of issues to consider:

- Overall government thinking seems to be moving ever closer to the concept of 'evidence-based policy' and the Arts Councils (along with sister bodies involved in crafts, film and museums) are increasingly charged with providing data to support the monitoring process of their activity.



- The DCMS has commissioned a major project to set up a Regional Cultural Data Framework which aims to standardise the way information is collected and reported across the country.
- However, the kind of data currently required by government, and considered as part of the RCDF, is very high-level and as much concerned with issues such as employment than with detailed attendance data
- The three Arts Councils currently commission omnibus surveys of the general population to research attendance and participation levels and to monitor attitudes to the arts. The results of these studies are providing as much information as government requires at the moment.

In the light of these factors, the decision was taken early on that this study need not consider the higher-level information needs.



2. Consultation Findings: What could the future hold?

When encouraged during the consultation discussions to consider what a 'brave new world' of audience data use might look like, there are a number of issues that people identified as characteristics that change had taken place. These are not necessarily achievable short or medium-term outcomes, but people felt there were seven key benefits that could ultimately flow from a culture change across the arts.

2.1. The use of data in organisations would be the norm rather than the exception

To use the standard model about the diffusion of innovation, those organisations using audience data well now are only those in the 'Early Adopter' category (even though some of these early adopters have actually been using data well for over ten years). A cultural shift would clearly have taken place if the majority of organisations were making good use of data.

2.2. Realistic expectations of marketing

If marketers were able to take clear tactical marketing decisions in the knowledge of what works best for which scenario, this would mean much more efficient use of marketing resources. Similarly if the whole organisation had an understanding of audience behaviour then it would be much clearer about how effective marketing might be as a whole and what level of difference it can make.

2.3. Consistent and unambiguous use of terminology

If everyone across the arts was clear about the exact definitions of terms and concepts then this would reduce the current level of apprehension and anxiety as well as enabling easy and useful comparisons to take place.

2.4. Groundswell of demand for more information and context

If there was a wide range of individuals and organisations lobbying funders for more information about audiences then this would definitely show that the culture was starting to change at the grass roots.

2.5. New research projects building on past experience

Planning a process of collecting and summarising information about audiences doesn't mean that there will be no need for new research in the future. But if it was clear that new projects were always undertaken with a strong understanding of what others had done in the field in the past, then this would avoid duplication and enable the development of an ever-greater body of knowledge. There could also be savings made within the funding system which could be reinvested in education and training.

2.6. Informed risk taking

Arts organisations thrive on taking risks – doing things where they have less confidence in what the outcome might be. The use of data in decision-making is sometimes blamed for making organisations 'safe', but in reality a greater understanding of audiences should enable more risks to be taken, because organisations will be able firstly to acknowledge and quantify the level of risk, and secondly, to know more about which mitigating actions will be likely to have the best effect.

2.7. More successful organisations

Ultimately success should be judged on whether audience data has helped organisations achieve their main objectives better – whether that be selling more tickets, attracting more visitors or engaging with more participants.



3. Recommended programme of work

In order to move towards the outcomes described above, it is proposed that a programme of work be undertaken, based around the four key priority areas suggested by the Arts Councils in the brief along with a fifth priority focused specifically on training and advocacy.

This work could be split into a number of discrete, manageable parcels which could then be implemented in such a way as to maximise the cumulative effect. This overall initiative would be a major intervention with long-term effects and implications but there is clearly no quick fix or magic bullet – if there was, things would have been changed long before now.

At each level there are some options as to how the desired outcomes might best be achieved, and these are set out and considered. In each case there is recommended option, which has then been worked up into a detailed project description. These are included as appendices.

There is a summary for each recommended project which describes the time it should take, when it is recommended that it should start, its relationship to other proposed projects, the outline budget and a list of deliverables. Some projects are identified as ‘quick wins’ – that is projects which could be delivered quickly and with minimum risk and maximum benefit.

3.1. Agreed protocols and guides to best practice

Although there is a great deal of excellent work going on, particularly in terms of data-driven research, this has been hampered by:

- a lack of accepted standards and definitions of terms
- the incompatible ways that different ticketing systems work – particularly in the way they report or export data
- some key areas of uncertainty over various aspects of Box Office data that are regularly cited as arguments against a wider use of data analysis in planning or decision making
- a lack of data sharing which has been getting in the way of much strategic and tactical marketing activity, as well as preventing organisations such as touring companies from doing as much with audience data as their colleagues in venues

It is recommended therefore that four separate tasks are undertaken:

3.1.1. Standard Protocols and Best Practice Guides (Appendix A)

There are a number of key concepts around the use of audience data which need to be clarified – for the sake of individual organisations which use them, for people attempting projects across multiple organisations and for funding bodies requesting information from organisations. These would cover data collection, research methodologies and terminology as well as containing a ‘how to’ guide to explain which sources of data were useful for which tasks and what the relative advantages of each might be. These standards need to be made as unambiguous as possible, and then publicised and ‘sold-in’ to ensure their widespread adoption.

Benefits

- Much of the consultation showed that one of the things holding organisations back from doing more with audience data was a fear about terms and concepts
- The issue of comparability has meant that some opportunities to link projects together to gain a wider picture have been missed because of differing approaches to key factors.

It is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- There is a need to set down standards that can be adopted across the whole arts infrastructure. The Arts Councils are best placed to do this by pulling together best practice in other bodies and adapting it to be applicable for everyone. As government bodies with wide responsibilities cutting across scale and artform, standards produced by



the Arts Councils would also have an authority that no other body or grouping could match.

- As the funders of many research projects, the Arts Councils can expect that their standard protocols are adhered to
- A UK overview by the Arts Councils working together would mean country wide consistency (particularly if the Arts Council of Northern Ireland were also to take part)

Recommendation

- To commission a consultant to deliver a series of definitions and standard protocols, and a set of guides to good practice that illustrate those concepts in action. This process would be done with only a small amount of research and consultation.

Alternative option

- The protocols and guides could be compiled through a process of extensive consultation. It is felt this would enormously lengthen the process with little benefit – consensus is notoriously difficult to achieve!

Status:	Quick Win
Start time:	As soon as possible
Duration:	Most work completed in first year, allowance for additions and amendments in subsequent two years
Deliverable:	Written protocols and guides

3.1.2. Standard system reports (Appendix B)

This task will identify, specify and commission a series of standard reports from all major ticketing system suppliers. Currently each ticketing system produces reports which look very different, use different terms and compile different figures. The aim in setting up this project is not to criticise what is currently available on individual systems, but rather to develop an additional 'standard' approach.

Benefits

- Currently region or agency wide analysis and comparisons are far more expensive and complicated than they need to be
- Touring companies have great difficulty compiling comparable figures

It is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- System suppliers are completing commercial organisations, and a neutral third party (with authority) is best placed to broker discussion
- The Arts Councils are the only bodies with sufficient authority to set down what the standards should be
- The Arts Councils could ask clients to produce specific reports for submission to funding surveys – this would speed up the process and help ensure true compatibility

Recommendation

- It is recommended that a project establish with key users what the needs for such reports are, and then work with the ticketing system suppliers to design and implement them.

Other delivery option:

- Previous attempts to encourage suppliers to work together by relying on their good nature have failed to produce any significant changes. They all appear willing to join an initiative and further discussions should aim to build a relationship



Start time: Within first year, after the first protocols are produced
Duration: Specification in first year, results produced by middle to end of second year.
Allowance for additional companies and changes in third year.
Deliverable: Every major ticketing system would have a series of standard reports and both direct and indirect users of those systems would know what was available and how the data might best be used

3.1.3. Specific research to validate box office data (Appendix C and D)

There are two key issues which have been frequently cited as immediate flaws in any analysis based on box office transaction data – the effect of door sales (transactions where name and address detail is not captured on the box office database) and the relationship between bookers and attenders given that there are some customer who regularly attend with other people but whose records on the ticketing system are incorrect because the tickets are bought by someone else.

These two projects would attempt to find out whether these effects are significant, to find whether a standard measure can be applied to data projects to correct for them and to make suggestions about how these factors can be overcome when data is collected.

Benefits

- Undertaking these tasks could potentially increase the value of everyone's box office data, which would be valuable at both individual organisation level and to any wider projects that use box office data

It is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- these are relatively 'un-sexy' projects which would appear not to have immediate specific benefits, but they could be quite significant to anyone doing data analysis, from venues themselves to region-wide agencies
- these projects would show the Arts Councils' commitment to get to grips with smaller but politically important issues as well as addressing more high-flying projects
- Indeed, there is an argument for suggesting that it is much better that they are commissioned by the Arts Councils because it is important that the Arts Councils get credit for undertaking such clearly useful research!

Recommendation

- To commission two research projects to undertake a mixture of database research and face to face interviews to determine whether there is a significant effect either from door sales or because of the relationship between bookers and attenders. The aim would be to produce some kind of standard measure that could be applied whenever box office data was analysed in order to come up with a more accurate picture that was weighted to take into account the effect of these two factors.
- It is also recommended to set aside additional funds for further similar specific research investigations once the first two are completed

Start time: Second year, once Protocols have been produced and considered
Duration: One year each. Tasks can run in tandem
Deliverables: Conclusive research findings as to the effects of these two factors, alongside clear information about how this can be applied to data analysis at all levels



3.1.4. Data ownership guidelines (Appendix E)

The issue of data ownership has got in the way of the good use of data on many occasions in the past. Venues have not shared data with touring companies or promoters or released it for analysis projects. This is in part because of a wide spread misunderstanding of how the data protection act applies to the arts.

Benefits

- This issue has been getting in the way of much strategic and tactical marketing activity, as well as preventing organisations such as touring companies from doing as much with audience data as their colleagues in venues

This is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- There is a strong need for leadership, to demonstrate the benefits that can flow from data sharing and to encourage organisations to change their policies (particularly the commercial sector who will be the most difficult to persuade)
- The aim in doing this project is that an 'official' line from the Arts Councils, alongside good case history of the benefits that data sharing can bring, will help effect change by encouragement rather than by compulsion

Recommendation

- To commission a project to consult with key parties and identify all the issues around the issue of data sharing, including the legal aspects, examples of benefits that have flowed from sharing, problems that sharing can cause and so on. The project would then propose a policy for adoption by the Arts Councils, alongside guidelines for the appropriate use and management of shared data

Status: Quick Win
Start time: As soon as possible
Duration: One year
Deliverable: A proposed policy to be adopted by the Arts Councils, sample contract clauses for organisations to use, and case studies of successful data sharing

3.2. Sector-wide classification system (Appendix F)

An enormous amount of time and effort has been spent over many years to compile classification systems for the arts. Various systems have been devised which range from the very high level, to the very detailed and precise. Despite some disagreement about most desirable level of detail – there is almost total agreement that an 'official' Arts Councils approved system is required.

The original brief asked for consideration of a comprehensive and detailed system which could be used across all the arts to cover all needs. What this report, however, proposes is a high-level system, because

- The inherent problem with a detailed subtle system is that classification becomes too subjective thereby counteracting the advantage of a detailed system in the first place. Experience seems to show that detailed classification systems only work well when applied consistently by the same person
- The majority of users for sector wide systems are funders, agencies and consultants engaged with cross -organisation comparison. In many cases these activities actually only require high level systems, because the aim is to compare 'types' rather than 'specifics'
- Many excellent industry sector schemes have been designed which serve the purpose of that sector well. Combining these into one global classification would create a complicated and overwhelming system.





Recommendation

- To commission a two-tier classification scheme which would ideally take as its starting point one of the existing sets of high-level categories.
- To research other more detailed classifications and propose how these can be mapped onto the new scheme

Benefits

- Any research projects, and particularly those funded by the Arts Councils, would be able to use consistent classifications thus saving time and enabling the results of different projects to be more comparable

This is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- The Arts Councils need to develop and publicise the final classification in order to give it the 'gravitas' necessary to ensure widescale adoption
- As major users of classification systems for funding surveys, their decisions affect a large number of arts organisations anyway

Status:	Quick Win
Start time:	As soon as possible
Duration:	Few months
Deliverables:	A classification system, with guides to how it might best be used

3.3. Publicly owned data set for benchmarking (Appendix G)

There has been much discussion over many years about the concept of benchmarking in the arts – to what extent it is possible to increase the level of knowledge about patterns of attendance and activity across the arts as a whole, and to provide organisations with an effective way to compare their performance with others, across a wide range of indicators.

The brief proposed a system based on attendance data, largely taken from box office systems. The additional option of combining existing region-wide data pooling and benchmarking exercises, and commissioning new ones to fill the gaps, was also considered.

There are a number of key issues:

- With the current lack of data sharing it is felt that a large number of organisations would be reluctant to submit their database of bookers and sales into a national pool. Regional projects have succeeded because of the existing relationship between venues and local agencies
- The lack of standardised data capture protocols mean that much data is not truly comparable
- Most large scale benchmarking projects have taken longer and more resources than originally anticipated – a national scheme could completely founder on the sheer scale of the undertaking
- Organisations without a computerised ticketing system or ticketed admission or touring companies simply don't have detailed booking history information
- Recent region wide data pooling projects have shown strong trends and similarities – it is possible that the combination of these could provide more useful information than the creation of a whole new national scheme. Even if this were to happen, however, there is little evidence that the results could be of immediate use to organisations on the ground
- The sheer amount of time that would be necessary to gather detailed database information on a national basis would inevitably cause the data to be spread over some years – this would compromise the comparison

- There was much support for a system which would allow organisations to benchmark their performance against others, across a wide range of indicators, not just to do with attendances

Recommendation

Taking these issues into account, it is therefore recommended that a web-based benchmarking system be established.

The system would allow organisations to enter various items of data about their activities using a form on a web site. The data would be 'top-line' figures about the organisation's work and would include details on key operating indicators as well as summary information about attendance levels and audiences / participants.

After an organisation had submitted its data, it would then be able to see benchmark figures which compared its own performance against an average of other comparable organisations. These benchmarks would be calculated and updated in real time, and it would also be possible for organisations to choose the grouping that they wished to use as the comparator. It would therefore be possible to benchmark an organisation against all others that had entered data in a geographic area, or all those which presented a certain artform, or those on the same scale. The only restriction would be that the categories would have to be large enough to prevent individual organisations from being identified.

The sort of information that could be collected would include:

- Ticket sales, capacity etc broken down by high-level artform classification, total ticket sales etc
- Number of staff, total salary budget, number of marketing staff, number of volunteers etc
- Number of members, income from members, income from sponsorship etc
- Number of programme sales, income from programme sales etc
- Total marketing spend, total training budget etc
- Levels of funding and earned income

Organisations would only need to enter raw data about their own activities – the system would need to be able to work out key ratios, and also link to external data such as the population numbers of a catchment area. It is very important that the information contained within the benchmarking system is as much of relevance to general managers as to marketers, which would mean that information about audiences (linked to other indicator data) would potentially be much more widely used within organisations.

There would be a number of advantages to this process:

- All information could be gathered by any arts organisation regardless of whether they have a computerised ticketing system, or ticketed admission. This could create a truly industry-wide benchmark.
- It would be possible to obtain some idea of total arts provision, which would then place specific research into a real framework.
- That data would then be of key use to organisations in comparing their performance across a wide variety of indicators – not only attendance. It could help organisations to gauge whether a dip in dance audiences was reflected across the country, or whether their level of marketing spend per ticket sold was the same as other organisations of the same scale.

This kind of benchmarking information is currently being collected and analysed in a number of key projects around the country, including the TMA member survey, the various 'How's Business?' surveys run by audience development agencies, and in some ad-hoc systems set up



independently by groups of organisations. The fact that these systems exist, and that organisations seem keen to take part, even to the extent of paying something to participate, would seem to indicate that they recognise the kinds of benefits that can flow from this sort of arrangement which would only be magnified by running a national project which would ensure the comparability of information. The proposed system may well have the capability to make the benchmarking process much easier to run for these groupings of organisations as it would potentially free them up from having to set up collection and analysis systems themselves.

Once this system is established, there is a major spin-off benefit that could arise. Various funding bodies, such as local authorities or Arts Councils, are currently collecting information from their client organisations on an annual basis. Once the benchmarking system were set up, it would be possible to combine it with some or all of these data collection exercises. This would have a number of advantages:

- Organisations would have a real incentive to enter information into the system (and consequently into their funder's survey) because they would be getting back meaningful and useful benchmarks in return. This has the potential to increase the number of organisations that reply to voluntary surveys
- Because part of the benchmarking system would be clear best practice guides as to how organisations should collect and summarise data in order to get the best out of the benchmarks then the quality of data collected by funders could potentially increase significantly
- Many organisations find it extremely vexing to have to present the same information in subtly different ways to different funders (and sometimes to different departments of the same funding body). So, as the process of setting up this benchmarking system would include getting funders to agree on which information to collect and in what format, organisations would then have a great deal of time and aggravation released in only having to submit information once. There are already examples of this sort of approach in action, including in Edinburgh where the city council and Scottish Arts Council are working together to streamline their information requirements of funded organisations.

There will clearly need to be sensitivity to the current importance of these client surveys to funders in setting up this system, but the potential benefits would seem to outweigh the difficulties. The recent pilot exercise in Essex where organisations have submitted information to both the Arts Council and local authorities via a web site and then been able to benchmark themselves afterwards, has worked through a number of the issues which it will be important to take account of once their project is written up in detail.

The system would be designed so that organisations only had to enter information that was relevant to them. For instance, only organisations funded by the Arts Council of Wales would be asked about the number of Welsh language performances, and galleries would not be asked about sales of programmes. Only funders would be able to see the raw data from organisations, and the process would need to be transparent so the organisations knew exactly who was able to access what information.

The third aspect of this benchmarking system is that the system could very easily work across any existing boundaries set down by funding bodies. If the benchmark data were of use to organisations then there is every reason why a major commercial theatre in a city would be keen to supply data alongside the funded organisations, and the benchmark would consequently be much more realistic and up-to-date as a result. Indeed, in all the existing benchmarking projects, non-funded / commercial organisations have taken part because they see the potential for using the resulting benchmarks themselves. This could be a virtuous circle – the more organisations take part, the better the benchmark information which would then encourage more organisations to take part. The guiding principle is that only organisations which submit data can then access the benchmarks.





Why this needs to be overseen by the Arts Councils

- The Arts Councils are the only bodies with enough authority to establish this on a large enough scale, particularly if it is then to include activity which is not funded by local authorities or Arts Councils

Delivery options

- Because of the scale, it may be desirable to phase this project, beginning with regularly funded clients of the Arts Councils, but the quality of benchmarks will always suffer if the data is incomplete, and this has the potential to damage take-up
- It may be possible to obtain partnership funding from Local Governments, The Audit Commission, Welsh Assembly, Scottish Parliament, DCMS etc specifically for this project.
- Part of the project will also need to be a programme of advocacy to encourage organisations to enter data and to demonstrate the possible uses of the benchmarks with case studies and guides to best practice.

Start time: Planning and consultation to start in year one. Initial system available in year two.

Duration: Ongoing project

Deliverables: A functioning data collection and benchmarking system, and guides on how to collect & input data, and how to make use of the benchmark results

3.4. Virtual warehouse (Appendix H)

The consultation showed that there is surprisingly little information sharing at present. Despite the appearances of being a very close-knit industry, there are few formal ways in which people can keep in touch with what others are doing or find out what lessons others have learnt.

There are clear reasons why the kind of central repository of information and research proposed by the project brief would be very valuable:

- People often don't start projects because they lack the time to develop special skills, but in many cases the problem may already have been solved by someone else
- People are more likely to adopt new ideas when they can see how others have used them in practice
- There needs to be an easy way in which experience and knowledge can be accessed by anyone within the arts, and that whatever their skill level, they will be able to gain understanding quickly

The following alternative options were considered:

- A write up and categorisation of all research and action research projects could be established (like a larger scale New Audiences web site). This would have no interpretation
- A central information resource could be set up, with information about training, available publications, research projects, agreed protocols etc. This would essentially involve one way communication where facts were stored and made available
- An active editorial team could combine all of the above information with specifically commissioned work, peer review of research, and debate about key topics. Users could pose questions, seek opinions and search guidance notes about best practice



The following issues have been taken into consideration:

- The consultation showed that there was a wide variety of needs where information was concerned and that to set up a system which required knowledge on the part of the user to sift and interpret what was being presented to them would be of limited effect
- It is important that the site does not only contain 'good news'. There need to be examples of what doesn't work so that people don't make decisions on the basis of 'spin' rather than fact. This is a difficult line to tread, particularly given the range of understanding of users, but there does need to be space for people to share and reflect on 'failures' in order for the industry as a whole to ensure that the same mistakes are not repeated in the future
- One of the principal drivers of this entire programme of work is the need to share information, and many of the tasks require knowledge to be disseminated as widely as possible. The warehouse could be taken one step further by creating a way of integrating all the other aspects of the initiative – a place to publish the standard protocols and case studies about their use, a place to list training courses using the new materials, somewhere for the benchmarking system to sit, and so on
- Because of the unique capabilities of the worldwide web – to aggregate information easily, wherever it is held; to allow information to be accessed in a number of ways without the need for duplication, and to enable almost universal access, regardless of geography or resources – it makes sense for this to be the principle communication medium. Web sites work best if there are fundamental objectives behind it which view the web as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself

Recommendation

It is recommended that an infrastructure be set up to enable the process of knowledge sharing to take place, based on an Internet web site. The programme has a number of elements:

- It would need to become a one-stop-shop for information about audiences, accessible to anyone, whatever their discipline or level of understanding
- It would be a publishing house for key information about arts audiences commissioned by the Arts Councils
- It would be a clearing house through which case studies and projects can be published and other relevant information can be gathered
- It would be a forum for contributions from a wide variety of individuals – funders, practitioners, academics, consultants etc. However the site would be aimed primarily at practitioners and consultants – having a very hands on feeling. Its aim is to be *useful* rather than (merely) *interesting*
- There would be strong opportunities for a community of interest to develop around the site where individuals would help each other by providing comment, examples of their own work and so on. The online retailer Amazon is a very good model – anyone could comment on studies and there would be sophisticated search and linking systems (for example 'other people who consulted this document also looked at' or 'I'd like to put a particular project onto my wish list in case researchers or agencies are looking for interesting projects')
- The site would have an editorial voice and everything on the site would be categorised, indexed and commented on. A user who looked at the write-up of an audience development project, for example, would get a clear understanding of what the editorial team believed to be the key successes and failings of the project, in addition to the information supplied by the organisation which wrote the project report. This doesn't mean that there would be a single point of view – it would be desirable to combine comments and input from a wide variety of people but there needs to be a feeling that the site is more than just an unmediated library of content. The Australian site fuel4arts.com is a very good example of how this balance can be achieved

- It would aim to combine 'official' definitive content from the Arts Councils of England, Wales and Scotland (and possibly Northern Ireland at a later date) with contributions from a variety of people – content specifically written for the site and information previously published elsewhere
- The site would become the place where anyone would expect to turn to find information about audiences. It would contain all the content generated by other projects recommended in this report (standard protocols and case histories for example). It would not, however, need to replace the number of existing information outlets (such as the New Audiences web site, the Arts Marketing Association or Fuel4arts). The real advantage of Internet technology is the way that a site such as this can aggregate content and present it in a usable way without duplication.

As examples the web site could contain:

- Definitive Arts Councils views on best practice and definition of terms
- Past, present and future research projects and case studies with editorial commentary and peer review
- Information and online booking for Arts Council-funded training programs and any other approved arts training
- Access to, commentary on and suggestions about use for the Data collection and benchmark system results and TGI area profile reports (if permission could be obtained for their wider dissemination)
- Full details of the standard system reports, their uses and how to compare them
- Explanation of the data sharing guidelines, their implications and best practice.
- Lots of handholding 'how to do' articles on topics such as 'increasing frequency of existing attenders' or 'building an audience of families'
- A portal to other information available on the web – such as census or ONS data, with guidelines for suggested use and reference to the protocols
- A searchable index of terms, projects and resources available to arts administrators
- A listing of Arts Councils publications and other suppliers of relevant publications
- Links to international sites such as Fuel4arts in Australia and the National Arts Marketing Project in America
- A defined 'induction' route through the site for people just starting a job within an arts organisation who need to know 'what's going on'
- A content provider for other websites, either by the use of links or through live 'feeds'. The Arts Marketing Association site could, for example, include a current listing of all marketing training compiled from the web site training database.

Benefits

- A system of this nature has the potential to effect major change in the way organisations operate, learn and share information.
- This could result in much more efficient marketing activity and more effective use of resources when commissioning research projects
- Setting up an infrastructure would also mean that there was a focal point for all the work undertaken in the field of audience data by the Arts Councils - indeed, many of those pieces of work would otherwise need to develop their own publishing and advocacy routes
- The infrastructure would also absorb admin tasks such as running the 'Training The Trainer' courses.



- A web site would be able to include online booking facilities which could be used by any training providers within the arts, thus potentially cutting their costs
- Indeed, many of the other projects recommended in this report will need channels through which to publish their outputs and having a site such as this will mean that each project does not have to create their own separate publishing mechanism.

This is something that can only be overseen by the Arts Councils because

- This is only something that the Arts Councils can do properly. Other organisations could assemble content, but only the Arts Councils can add an official ‘stamp’ to those elements of the site that carry definitive statements such as the standard event classification or the protocols.

Delivery options

- The recommended work described above is clearly a large scale undertaking. The option of only doing small sections of it, or taking a phased approach, should be considered. However, a project of this scale has demonstrable support from potential users, and all the concepts behind it were endorsed across the whole arts sector
- The work as recommended will also cross over with a number of existing projects – most specifically with Knowledge Services for Arts Management (KSAM), a consortium project funded by an ACE CPD grant which is now coming to the end of its current funding, and Arts Research Digest. This is an issue to be considered but it is recommended that discussions are held to see how the work of other projects can be included, and potentially enhanced, by this system
- There is a need to consider how this operation should be branded. There are strong arguments for it having its own identity (as the Australia Council chose to do with Fuel), but it would also work as part of each of the Arts Councils’ websites if that fitted more with their corporate strategies
- There needs to be a balance between setting up a team to ensure the effective delivery of this project and developing an editorial team which excludes other approaches. If the editorial team is perceived within the industry as ‘judge and jury’ in terms of deciding what can and can’t be included on the site then the project will be much less effective than if a broad approach is taken.

Start time: Planning and consultation to start in year one. Initial system available in year two.

Duration: Ongoing project

Deliverables: A website containing a huge range of content, with an editorial team managing and developing it and seeking ways to draw in more users

3.5. Increasing skills and advocacy

Many of those consulted identified a real lack of training on data issues. This report therefore proposes that a fifth priority should be added to the list set out in the brief.

Change will not happen without raising the general levels of skills in using audience data. The emphasis must be on the word ‘general’ – the whole base level needs to be raised across all sectors of the arts infrastructure. This doesn’t mean that everyone need become statisticians overnight. As well as developing technical skills in data manipulation for people who need them, there also needs to be an increase in levels of understanding about what is possible with audience data.

Various issues have been taken into consideration:

- Many of the training courses that ran in the past (particularly those about the uses of TGI and the Beaufort Welsh Omnibus Survey) are now sorely missed. Box Office system suppliers have also not been good in recent times at providing training addressing marketing and data issues rather than functional aspects of systems



- Audience data is very clearly demarcated as the responsibility of marketing, even within organisations where marketing departments make excellent use of it, there is clearly a need to bridge the gap and encourage those that run arts organisations to understand the benefits that data can bring
- Arts Councils officers are a key link in making change happen. They are the funding system's key points of contact for arts organisations, and their input into those organisations on a day-to-day basis, and particularly at annual review meetings, is key to getting the message about business planning, and the role of audience data in it, across
- Agencies (where they are present) have a variety of attitudes towards training, some run ongoing large scale training programmes and buy in expertise, some run sporadic or smaller scale training and some do not run any courses at all. In most cases these courses are aimed at marketing managers and their staff.
- Attempts have been made to establish major accredited training courses for example Cambridge Marketing College and the AMA established ACAM but more institutions are yet to teach it, largely because of the expense and bureaucracy involved in the validation process
- It is important that training is locally available all over the country so that no-one is penalised with excessive travel costs. Whilst distance learning is an option – this would remove many of the network and confidence building advantages of training.
- The TMA course Druidstone is regarded as the pinnacle of introductory training for marketing managers, but there are only a limited number of places available each year.



It is recommended that the following three tasks are undertaken:

3.5.1. Skills Development Programme (Appendix I)

The task involves commissioning a suite of training courses aimed at staff who come into contact with audience data within ticketed and non ticketed organisations this could be Box Office Managers, Marketers, Fundraisers Education Staff, administrators etc but not General Managers. The courses would cover three levels – Introductory, Basic and Advanced. This does not commit the Arts Councils to being training providers – the aim is to create courses which any suitable body can then deliver with the training materials provided to them free of charge. Deliverers would be required to attend specific 'Training the Trainer' courses for that topic.

There would need to be a quality control process that began with the development of the courses and continued to monitor the delivery process. It may be possible to link with an existing validation authority such as a university in order to ensure that the quality control systems related to the wider national training and qualifications picture.

Benefits

- Undertaking this work would mean that for the first time there was a complete range of training courses covering the field of audience data at all levels
- A better-trained sector would undoubtedly mean that audience data was better used, bringing knock-on benefits already described
- This approach enables the Arts Councils to define a clear curriculum which meets a range of needs, without necessarily having to deliver courses themselves
- Providing course materials free of charge to suitable bodies allows organisations such as audience development agencies to better meet the needs of their clients and potentially provides them with an income source
- Enabling existing training providers to deliver training will potentially make training more affordable for participants because providers need to spend less time preparing courses.

- Training providers such as audience development agencies or umbrella bodies can bring their own understanding of a local or sectoral picture to the training, thereby adding value.
- Commercial training providers will still be able to differentiate themselves from the subsidised sector whilst ensuring that their courses dovetail with what is offered elsewhere.

This task is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- Whilst umbrella bodies do offer training they tend to be defined by their constituent members and not necessarily take the whole arts community into consideration
- Many umbrella bodies do not have a representative geographical spread over England, Scotland and Wales and this would effect the availability of the courses
- The Arts Councils can ensure compliance with the protocols and best practice
- It was pointed out during consultation that other sectors such as charities, have a recognised and systematic programme of training which all staff embarking on jobs involving data would be expected to attend. The Arts Councils are the official body with the authority to do the same within the rest of the arts.

Delivery options

- Training courses could be established in partnership with commercial training providers. However experience has shown that the relatively low fees which the arts require do not make this an appealing option for organisations concerned with profit
- Courses could be established and the Arts Councils could commission and manage all of the training delivery. However this would be cumbersome and currently none of the Arts Councils is involved in direct training provision

Start time: First two courses delivered in year 1 with more following in years 2 and 3
 Duration: Ongoing project
 Deliverables: A series of training courses, developed in such a way as to allow them to be delivered by any suitable training providers. The project includes the opportunity to develop new courses and refine existing ones, once the initial phase is over.

3.5.2. Management Advocacy and Development (Appendix J)

Managers who run organisations could benefit enormously from information about how the systematic use of audience data can help their organisation, and a strong need was identified in the consultation for audience data to be used as a management tool as well as a marketing tool.

Recommendation

It is proposed that an 18-month action research programme be established to work with a specific group of General Managers from a wide range of arts organisations to explore and refine methods of using audience data to better inform the planning and day to day running an arts organisation. The findings of the group – both good and bad – would be used as case studies to establish and spread best practice throughout the industry. There is also the possibility to include local authority arts officers in this group.

Various issues have been taken into consideration:

- This would not be an attempt to create a ‘how to run an organisation by numbers’ text book
- This should not be another ‘project’ for the arts organisation – a way of getting funding to do some piece of activity. About process rather than outcome – helping to refine business planning, artistic decisions, marketing planning and operations



- The whole aim of this task is to get people to refine their skills – to incorporate the use of audience data into the way they make decisions so that it can be used alongside innate knowledge and understanding, on an equal footing
- The umbrella bodies representing arts managers and touring constituencies would be key partners in this exercise, particularly in promoting the results
- There would also be links here with Funding System training programmes so that Arts Council officers are able to make use of some of the key findings in the way they consider how best to encourage organisations to use data in the future

Benefits

- Managers are often difficult to convince about new concepts, and particularly about issues involving audience data. This peer-led approach is designed to overcome this by creating case studies that managers will potentially pay more attention to, particularly if they demonstrate clear and achievable benefits for organisations that make better use of data.

This task is best overseen by the Arts Councils because

- Arts Councils can provide the required subtle push for organisations to participate which would encourage participation
- The findings can be more widely disseminated if they have Arts Councils backing
- The Arts Councils remit covers the good management of organisations from across all sectors and scales. This programme would help all of these.

Recommended methodology:

This programme should involve organisations covering a mixture of scale, geography and artform with potential participants nominated by an Arts Council or other body such as local authority. Participants would need to be broadly receptive to the idea of using audience data, but they should not be from organisations which are currently well advanced in this field

Participants would receive mentoring from the programme consultant in changing the way their organisation works – helping them to find ways of getting to know more about what audience data is available to them, seeing how this can be included in the business planning process, and how to set up systematic ways of ensuring data use on an ongoing basis. The consultant will support the manage throughout the programme, visiting each participant twice a year. At the end of the programme, organisations will write up case studies to help others learn from their experiences – these documents will need to cover the ‘bad’ as well as the ‘good’!

It is anticipated that individuals will work together in cluster groups so that they have other people to talk to during the programme and brainstorm ideas. These groups may also get together to receive training.

This programme is designed to generate case history, but also to help refine the kinds of techniques advocated as part of the wider audience data initiative.

Start time: Initial work in year 1 with main projects happening in year 2
 Duration: Three-year project
 Deliverables: A series of written-up case studies and a cohort of managers with a much better understanding of audience data in practice.

3.5.3. Funding system training (Appendix K)

There is a large number of officers in the three Arts Councils who come into day-to-day contact with client organisations – regularly funded organisations, project grant recipients, lottery grant recipients, applicants for funding, and so on. Often these officers have a



background in artistic programming, but their responsibilities mean that they need to be conversant with all business aspects of the arts too.

Recommendation

- A training programme should be set up to bring Arts Councils staff up to speed with the issues around audience data – what benefits can flow from using it, how it might help specific organisational problems and so on. This would also include a consideration of all the projects which form part of the overall audience data initiative.

Benefits

- This would assist in moving forward the understanding of audience data as a management tool.

Delivery Options:

- This training could be incorporated into more general on-going schemes run by each Arts Council or run as a standalone course to which every officer is invited.

Start time: Planning and consultation to start in year two with training delivered in year 3
Duration: 18 months
Deliverables: Increased levels of awareness of audience data amongst Arts Councils officers.

3.5.4. Additional Role for the Virtual Warehouse

A significant part of the proposed Virtual Warehouse project also involves advocacy. This can be a virtuous circle – the more information is available that helps organisations work better, the more organisations will use the Warehouse, the greater the demand there will be for better information on audiences and for guidance on ways to use it in practice.

The role of the Warehouse team to publicise that project and to work to bring more people to use it will also have the knock-on effect of increasing the levels of awareness and understanding of audience data and its value.

4. Delivery

There is a balance to be struck between pragmatism and idealism in many elements of the programme. There is a case for making sure that tasks are thoroughly thought through and that every possible interested party has been consulted before work is started. However, this would mean that progress became unbearably slow, and there is an argument that there will be a more reasoned reaction from the sector to something concrete rather than theoretical. It is proposed that some of the more major elements would be started more quickly and developed and refined over time.

The Initiative will have to balance *push* and *pull* in achieving its objectives. It will simply not work for anyone, least of all the Arts Councils, to be seen to be deciding on high how things will be, and then insisting that organisations embrace change wholeheartedly simply because they are told to do so. On the other hand, it is equally unrealistic to expect change to happen from the grass roots if the objective is to adopt universal ways of doing things. The key aim is for the Arts Councils to lead the change through clear and consistent statements, and by demonstrating in practice that they themselves have embraced the concept. Conversely, by setting up ways in which organisations can be exposed to examples of how others have benefited from change, there should be a *pull* from managers demanding better access to data so that they can take advantage of some of those benefits in their own organisations.



There have been many attempts to get similar projects off the ground over the years – some of which have been successful but many of which foundered. They were hampered by factors such as:

- **Lack of wide, joined-up vision.** Some projects have suffered from being too small in scale, even if this was originally regarded as an advantage in making the project deliverable. Where projects have been initiated by arts organisations, agencies or umbrella bodies, they have sometimes ended up being parochial – even if they succeeded within the sector, they were never going to be able to be rolled out because they hadn't taken into account the wider issues at the outset.
- **Lack of 'official' status.** As a corollary to this, projects that were initiated by bodies other than the Arts Councils have sometimes been difficult to 'sell into' participants because they lacked status (or a sufficiently compelling funding reason).
- **Ownership issues.** When organisations have created or suggested projects, they then often find it difficult to relinquish ownership of the solution. This has applied to charitable organisations within the arts as much as to the commercial sector.
- **Lack of money.** To enable some of this change to come about requires the sort of ongoing funding that only major national bodies are likely to be able to access.

The overall aim in delivering a programme of work to move the issue of audience data forward will be to avoid these pitfalls, largely by the Arts Councils taking the lead.

4.1. Project management

There are two types of project management which will need to underpin the delivery of this programme of work.

4.1.1. Project Assistance

The process of managing the various proposed pieces of work will require a level of assistance (roughly 20% of full-time over three years with more at the beginning of the process). This role will

- Manage the process of tendering for projects where this takes place. This involves placing advertising, sending out tender packs, fielding incoming tenders, managing the interview process and communicating with consultants during and after the process
- Manage the issuing of contracts
- Keep tabs on milestones for each project, and liaise with consultants over the delivery of reports and other outcomes. This will also involve the preparation of period status reports for the Steering Group
- Manage the payment process for consultants, keeping control of agreed budgets and managing incoming invoices and expenses claims

This work could be let as a freelance contract, either reporting to the audience development officer in one of the Arts Councils, or to the Steering Group, or it could be incorporated into existing resources in one of the Arts Councils.

4.1.2. Project Management

There is a need for someone to have a high-level overview of the way all the sections of work are proceeding and to be able to make key decisions as appropriate. The work needs to cover

- Meeting consultants to discuss elements of their work, and to make decisions where there is a need to clarify or change an element of the project brief
- Maintaining an overview of how projects fit together
- Reporting to the Steering Group



This could be handled by the three Arts Councils audience development officers, as they have for the Scoping Study, but this will be potentially quite demanding once a number of projects kick off.

4.1.3. Steering Group

There are a number of issues around the way these projects should be managed.

There is an argument for setting up an overall steering group containing representatives of each of the stakeholders identified during the consultation process and with both audience development and research officer input from the Arts Councils. This would then ensure that the progress of the overall initiative was continually tested against the needs of the stakeholders, and achievements would be quickly publicised. However, this has the potential to be quite unwieldy, and certainly difficult to co-ordinate

There is an alternative argument for having no steering group at all, but this obviously means that there is potential for the overall initiative to be criticised for exclusivity and opacity.

There could be one steering group for all the projects which would ensure consistency, but would also mean quite a high level of work that would need to be dealt with by this group.

An alternative is to maintain a core of group members and bring in specific expertise as appropriate for each project, although this would conceivably mean a large number of separate meetings.

It is recommended that this issue be discussed further and agreed by the Arts Councils.

4.2. Evaluation Framework

The overall programme of work needs to be underpinned by a set of evaluation criteria so that the progress of individual projects and the initiative as a whole is monitored and measured. This will need to be embedded into the programme of work rather than bolted on so that there is a continual process of review and refinement as time goes on. The need for such detailed evaluation has a number of elements:

- The overall impact of the initiative needs to be measured as far as is possible, especially as the impact and value is likely to be complex and sophisticated.
- Each task needs to be able to report its outcomes in a way which is easily comparable
- The way in which the tasks interact needs to be evaluated alongside the outcomes of the tasks themselves
- The tasks that make up later phases of the initiative need to take into account lessons learned in earlier tasks
- Proving the effectiveness of the programme, and demonstrating its impact, will be crucial, not only for the funders but also as a key factor in the take up of the initiative's 'message' by the arts sector

A suggested methodology and budget for how this can be achieved is included as Appendix L.

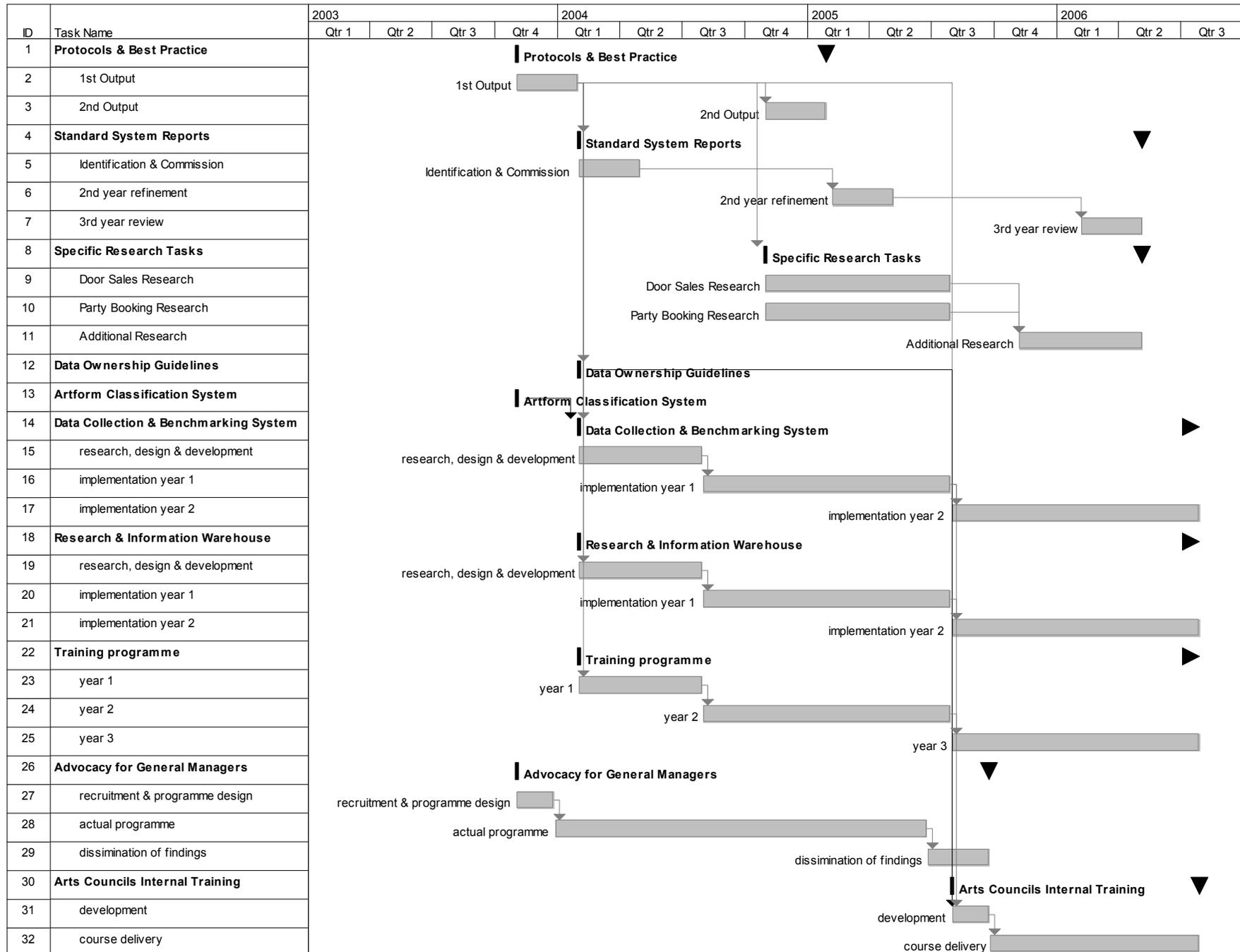
4.3. Project timing

The Gantt Chart below shows how the various pieces of work link together. Some are dependent on other tasks finishing, others can be standalone projects.

The timing of the start of the initiative as a whole is not fixed, but the plan below proposes November 2003 as the kick-off point. However, the commissioning of this scoping study has created a certain amount of expectation within the industry, on top of the long-term underlying feeling that 'something needs to be done'. It is important to capitalise on this by starting work as quickly as possible and therefore some of the elements of work have been identified as 'quick wins'.



5. Project Plan



6. General Recommendations

In addition to the recommended programme of work described above, there are a number of other key issues that have emerged as part of this process:

6.1. Change within the Arts Councils

A strong feeling emerged from the consultation phase of the Scoping Study that opportunities were being missed within individual Arts Councils and between the three organisations to make best use of audience data, and to eliminate duplication of effort wherever possible. The recent reorganisation of Arts Council England will certainly reduce some of the problems to do with the activities in the English regions, but there are still examples where projects undertaken by different departments within the national office overlapped. The Arts Councils in Wales and Scotland have each made some steps towards reducing duplication of data, particularly in terms of what funded organisations are asked to provide. There are also already good contacts between Audience Development and Research departments of all three Arts Councils – indeed, the Scoping Study was a collaboration along these lines, and a joint committee of research officers already exists.

It is recommended that a number of systems be put into place with the aim of avoiding duplication, and thereby potentially saving resources

- Set up a process by which the intention to commission or part-fund research of any kind (including audience data analysis) by any staff within the funding system is communicated to the Audience Development and Research officers in each of the three councils (including England's regional offices) before it is commissioned. This is not an 'approval' mechanism, but a way of flagging up potential overlaps or projects that could sensibly be combined. This could be achieved using email, or by setting up a more detailed database. This already happens with projects commissioned by research departments, but needs to be extended more widely
- Undertake an advocacy programme with the senior management of each Arts Council to discuss the potential benefits of using audience data – both within arts organisations and to inform the work of the Arts Councils. This could be undertaken by an external facilitator, or developed in-house.

6.2. Ongoing projects

The overall programme of work is described in three-year terms in this report, but it absolutely needs to be an ongoing process (particularly the Information Warehouse and the Benchmarking System) and **the Arts Councils should be wary of beginning these projects if there is a strong likelihood that it will not be possible to continue funding beyond that three year period.** The work proposed in this report is about raising awareness and developing understanding – as long as the evaluation continues to demonstrate benefits in line with the investment, it will be counter-productive to stop or scale down the activity after three years.

6.3. Academic institutions

There is a strong case for a separate project to consider how to develop relationships between the funding system and those academic institutions offering arts management qualifications. The consultation exercise showed that the courses provided little detailed 'training' about audience data and its uses, but it also showed that there was no direct contact from strategic arts bodies over the structure and content of courses as a whole.

6.4. TGI and Area Profile Reports

There has been a great deal of discussion during this project about the merits of the TGI data commissioned by Arts Council England. It is clear that this is an area that needs to be covered by both the Protocols and Training projects, but it is worth stating that **this report recommends that TGI continue to be funded** – both because of the value of being able to analyse trends using the large amount of historical data, and because the headline figures are valuable.



It is also recommended that a new system be developed for producing area profile reports, but because of the issues surrounding the release of the 2001 census data, this should not happen until April 2004 at the earliest, by which time the various data providers (such as CACI or Experian) will have decided exactly what form their new geodemographic systems will take, enabling an informed decision about which partner to work with to supply the additional data contained in the area profile reports.

Given some of the problems outlined earlier with the use of the computed figures for arts attendance **it is therefore recommended that when the area profile reports are redone, consideration is given to finding different ways to express the results which would be less prone to misinterpretation.** Those organisations which still felt that they had a need to use the raw computed figures could then apply to receive them.

It also strongly recommended that ACE should re-open the issue of confidentiality in their discussions with BMRB who provide TGI. The current policy which restricts access to organisations in direct receipt of Arts Council grants has hampered the arts sector as a whole, particularly local authorities and the organisations which they fund. It has also prevented discussion of detailed TGI findings at conferences and in publications, which has contributed in part to the suspicion about the accuracy of the figures. There may well be justifiable commercial reasons why this is not possible, but given the change of responsibility for TGI within ACE, now is the time to ask the question again.

6.5. Sharing research findings

Where data analysis projects are funded or commissioned by one of the Arts Councils, there should be a requirement to place at least some of the results in the public domain using the Information Warehouse project. This will be a perfect outlet and publicising projects should mean less duplication and overlap in the future. There are also currently not clear policies covering those situations where a funded project produces a tangible outcome which itself has a value, such as the regional benchmark results that have flowed from data:crunch analysis projects. **It is recommended that the issue of 'ownership' of outcomes should be considered when funding applications for data analysis projects are made.**



7. Consultants Credentials

The Catalyst Arts team for this project comprised three people:

- **Beth Aplin** was involved in a large number of ground-breaking data projects during her time at Select Ticketing Systems (now part of Tickets.Com) where she came into contact with a huge range of organisations around the UK and overseas. She has detailed hands-on knowledge of large database systems but also has a good understanding of the long-term implications benefits of having such a system. Since she became a consultant in 1999 she has worked on some key data projects including the recent Manchester-wide data:crunch exercise where she devised and implemented a plan to enable marketing managers taking part to make 'quick wins' from the information they were getting back, as well as helping them understand from a management perspective what benefits the data could bring longer-term.
- **Kieran Cooper** spent 12 years as a marketing manager before becoming a consultant in 2002, so has a very clear and current understanding of the situation 'on the ground'. He was a leading exponent of database marketing in the early 1990s being relatively rare in combining technical aptitude with a clear vision of the benefits of using data. He has worked in theatre, cinema, festivals and for an international orchestra and has presented at a number of conferences. Since becoming a consultant he has specialised in projects which require both technical input and marketing and business understanding, including the feasibility study for Birmingham's Young Person's Smartcard scheme in 1999.
- **Sarah Denner Brown** worked for CCN (now Experian) before starting her own consultancy and training business. She was involved in a number of projects using MOSAIC in the arts in the mid-1990s and was instrumental in the discussions about a sector-wide classification system. Sarah now works almost exclusively in data projects across all industry sectors and has influential contacts throughout the data supply and solutions sector. She has undertaken a great deal of consultancy and training in the better collection and use of data, and has a unique understanding of both the detail and application of analysis systems (such as MOSAIC) across the whole range of scales. She has a continuing interest in the arts as a performer and consumer.

The team was also greatly assisted and supported by Anne Roberts.



8. Organisations Consulted

The following individuals and organisations were consulted in the course of this project:

Brenda Eade	Anglia Polytechnic University
Ian Gasse & Phyllida Shaw	Arts Research Digest
Stephen Pugh	Artifax
Catherine Lamond	Arts About Manchester
Client handling team, Stabilisation	Arts Council England
Phil Cave	Arts Council England
Mike Clarke	Arts Council England
Lucy Hutton	Arts Council England
Vanessa Rawlings Jackson	Arts Council England
Adrienne Skelton	Arts Council England
Peter Verwey	Arts Council England
Paula Moreau Smith	Arts Council England London
Mark Robinson	Arts Council England North East
Rob Marshall	Arts Council England South East
Nigel Buckler	Arts Council England South West
Julie Eaglen	Arts Council England West Midlands
Nick Livingston	Arts Council Northern Ireland
Ann Kellaway	Arts Council of Wales
Liz Hill & Brian Whitehead	Arts Intelligence
Pam Henderson	Arts Marketing Association
Adrienne Pye , James Gough,, Leo Sharrock and John Parry	Arts Marketing Hampshire
Russell Jones	Association of British Orchestras
Anne Torreggiani & Orian Brook	Audiences London
Tracy Cochrane	Audiences Yorkshire
Ron Layne	Australia Council
Tim Roberts	Australian consultant
Joanna Sigsworth	BBC National Orchestra of Wales
Gavin Brooke	Birmingham Arts Marketing
Paul Kaynes	Birmingham Arts Marketing
Maria Bota	Bridgewater Hall
Paul Owens	Burns Owen Partnership
sales contacts	CACI
Joanna Davies	Cardiff Arts Marketing
Michael Quine	City University
Tim Baker	Consultant
Morag Ballantyne	Consultant
Sarah Bedell	Consultant
Stephen Cashman	consultant & NETWORK
Tina Dixon	Consultant
Jane Hogg	Consultant
Annabel Jackson	Consultant
Heather Maitland	Consultant
François Matarasso	Consultant
John Matthews	Consultant



Anne Millman	Consultant
Andrew McIntyre	Consultant
Sara Selwood	Consultant
Angela Tillcock	Consultant
Roger Tomlinson	Consultant
Richard Hogger	Creu Cmyru
Tim Drye	Datataalk
Elaine Snell	Developing Audiences North
Shelley Southern	Ebiquita
Paul Gudgin & Martin Reynolds	Edinburgh Festival Fringe
Joanna Baker	Edinburgh International Festival
Sue Grace	Essex County Council
sales contacts	Experian
Heather Baird	Federation of Scottish Theatre
Richard Leggatt & Christian Terrill	Galathea
sales contacts	GB Group
Andy Ryans	Hallé Orchestra
Marcus Wilson	Hi~Arts
Madeline Hutchins	Knowledge Services for Arts Management
Richard Hadley	Marketing:arts
Jonathan Goodacre	Momemtum Arts
Pete Bryan	National Association of Local Government Arts Officers
Chris Bailey & Jennifer Hives	Northumbria University
Mark Hazell	Norwich Theatre Royal
Stuart Nicolle	Purple Seven
Sue Howley	re:source
Ivan Wadeson	Royal Exchange Theatre
Kate Horton	Royal Shakespeare Company and Theatrical Management Association
Lucy Bird	Sage Gateshead
Ros Lamont	Scottish Arts Council
sales contacts	Skipton Group
Joanne Heasman	SMART
Shirley Kirk & Ruth Staple	South West Arts Marketing
Jo Taylor	St Georges Bristol
sales contacts	SPSS
Carol Leach & Helen Smith	Synchro systems
Bernard Martin	TEAM
Marion Bourbouze	The Audience Business, Edinburgh
David Dixon	The Phone Room
Rob Edwards	Tickets.com
David Emerson	previously Theatrical Management Association
Matthew Hare	TS.com
Lynfa Protheroe	Valleys Arts Marketing
Peter Bellingham	Welsh National Opera



9. Documents Consulted

The following documents were consulted during the course of the project. Thanks are due to the many organisations who supplied information.

Document	Author / Source	Date (where known)
Ticket2Research	ARTS Australia and The Dramatic Group	1999
Examples of individual organisation summary reports for Touring Dept large-scale review	Arts Council England	2003
Interim reports on discussions about data	Arts Council England	2000/1
Product type classification designed for grants management process	Arts Council England	2003
Audience Development Workplan 2003/4	Arts Council of Wales	2003
Research Workplan 2003/4	Arts Council of Wales	2003
Sample Key Statistics report from Annual Survey of RFOs	Arts Council of Wales	2002
Sample RFO survey form	Arts Council of Wales	2001
Supporting Creativity, arts development strategy	Arts Council of Wales, Welsh Assembly	2002
Distance Location Degradation Data, discussion papers	Arts Marketing Hampshire	
Sample application for partnership funding with data requirements	Arts Marketing Hampshire	2002
Sample ethnic population statistics report	Arts Marketing Hampshire	2000
Sample TGI report for Hampshire	Arts Marketing Hampshire	2000
The Coding of Artform Activities - proposal	Arts Marketing Hampshire	
Arts Index South East, various documents	Arts Marketing Hampshire, Sussex Arts Marketing, SMART	From 2002
A Census for the Arts, an audit of audiences for arts and entertainment activity	Arts Marketing Warwickshire, Birmingham Arts Marketing, Eastern Touring Agency, Midlands Arts Marketing	2000
Creating a Data Culture	Aspirational Arts Partnership for NETWORK	2002
Creating a Data Culture, interim papers	Aspirational Arts Partnership for NETWORK	2001/2
Examples of performance indicators for the arts (web site)	Audit Commission	2003
Key statistics about Australian arts audiences	Australia Council	2003
Sample issue of Diversity, Arts in a Multicultural Australia	Australia Council	2003
Australian Museum Audience Research Centre, background	Australian Museum	2003
The Arts in Birmingham: scale and reach	Birmingham City Council	2001
ARTS*ACORN draft event coding	Duncan May for CACI	1994



Document	Author / Source	Date (where known)
Creative consequences: the contribution and impact of the arts in Essex: 2001/2002	Essex County Council in partnership with the district, borough and unitary authorities of Essex	2003
Cultural Facilities Register feasibility study	Experian, BOP and Business Strategies for DCMS	2003
The Secret Magic of Numbers, a concept paper on information, evaluation and the arts	François Matterasso	2003
Cultural Diversity data research proposal	marketing:arts for Arts Council England	2003
Business Planning Work Book	Matthew Millman for the Arts Council of Wales	
Summary of Audiences Scotland research approach	Morris, Hargreaves, McIntyre for Scottish Arts Council	2003
Arts in England, attendance, participation and attitudes in 2001	Office of National Statistics for Arts Council England and re:source	2002
Users and non-users of museums, archives and libraries	PLB Consulting Ltd for re:source	2003
Audiences and Data, issues to consider and develop	Richard Bliss for Arts Council England	
Box Office Data in Marketing Planning Campaigns	Roger Tomlinson ARTS, for Arts Council of Great Britain	1992
Final report on the review and update of the centralised booking and information needs report 1999	Roger Tomlinson and Debbie Richards for Arts Council of Northern Ireland	2003
Evaluation for All (web site toolkit)	Scottish Arts Council	2003
Notes on benchmarking	Stuart Nicolle, Purple Seven	2003
Perception and attendance to the arts in Edinburgh	The Audience Business, Edinburgh	2001
Sample Market Analysis report (benchmarking data)	The Audience Business, Edinburgh	2002
Performance Indicators used by grouping of large-scale theatres	Theatre Royal Norwich, and others	2003
Audience Insight Australia - research and business plan	Tim Roberts, ARTS Australia for Australia Council	2000
Draft performance indicators for local authorities grouping	Valleys Arts Marketing	2003
Draft product type classification for local authorities grouping	Valleys Arts Marketing	2003
Sample report analysing Databox data for a venue	Valleys Arts Marketing	
Regional Cultural Data Framework, a users guide for researchers and policy makers	various authors for DCMS	2002
A Culture Strategy for Wales	Welsh Assembly Government	2002

