



**Future
Arts
Centres**



Individual Giving in Arts Centres
Learning from a Future Arts Centres
Action Research Group

February 2026

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Introduction

Arts centres across the UK are increasingly exploring individual giving as a way to build more resilient, values-led income streams and deeper relationships with their communities. While many venues recognise the potential of individual giving, it can feel daunting to begin: questions around capacity, culture, confidence and systems often act as barriers.

This report shares learning from the Individual Giving Action Research Group, convened by Future Arts Centres (FAC) late 2024 to 2025 as part of its wider work to support arts centres as ‘creative enterprises’. The group brought together a cohort of member organisations to test and implement individual giving initiatives, while creating space to reflect collectively and share learning.

Through this process, a consistent theme emerged: the challenges associated with individual giving were shared across organisations, regardless of scale. Even organisations with dedicated fundraising capacity experienced similar issues around confidence, systems and messaging. Smaller organisations found that, when considered proportionally, individual giving could be just as relevant and achievable as for larger venues, and can provide valuable unrestricted income.

A further shared challenge was the tension between short-term financial pressures and the longer-term nature of individual giving. The group’s participants reflected that individual giving is an investment that often takes time to embed, requiring upfront effort before financial returns are realised. In a context where organisations are under pressure to deliver immediate income, this can be a significant barrier. Acknowledging this from the outset helped organisations set more realistic expectations, secure internal buy-in, and avoid becoming discouraged too early.

This report is intended as a practical guide for arts centres and similar organisations considering setting up - or strengthening - individual giving schemes. It focuses on what worked, what was challenging (including what didn’t work), and what participants would do differently, illustrated through real examples from participating organisations.

Purpose of the Action Research Group

The Individual Giving Action Research Group was established to:

- Explore and test a range of approaches to individual giving within arts centres
- Provide peer support during the development and implementation of new initiatives
- Develop new, relevant models of individual giving suited to arts centre contexts
- Share learning across the FAC network and inform future support

The group built on earlier work delivered by FAC in association with [Achates](#), moving from theory into practice by supporting organisations actively implementing individual giving initiatives.

Membership and timeline

The group brought together nine Future Arts Centres members, most of whom had attended the Achates sessions and were committed to developing individual giving over a 12-month period. Each organisation nominated a senior lead with responsibility for this area of work.

Participating venues provided a balance of scale and geography:

Alnwick Playhouse

Barnsley Civic

Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

Dundee Contemporary Arts

Eastern Angles, Ipswich

Kings Place Music Foundation, London

RivelinCo, Sheffield

The Albany, London

The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre, Havant

The programme combined online and in-person sessions, including:

- An initial scoping session to share starting points and ambitions
- Peer review of individual giving plans
- Check-ins during implementation
- Collective reflection and comparison of approaches

Alongside group sessions, members committed time internally to developing, launching and embedding individual giving initiatives within their organisations.



What happened?

At the outset, organisations were at very different stages. Some had existing donation mechanisms but limited uptake; others were starting from scratch. Common themes included low confidence in asking, fragmented systems, lack of organisational buy-in and concern about audience response.

Over the course of the programme, participants:

- Clarified and simplified their individual giving propositions
- Invested time in internal culture change and staff confidence
- Tested new tools, messaging and donor journeys
- Reflected honestly on capacity, pace and organisational readiness

Crucially, the group provided space to step back from day-to-day pressures, reflect collectively, and learn from peers facing similar challenges.

“Being part of the FAC Individual Giving Action Research Group held us accountable in a really positive way and ensured regular energy and focus on the work.”

The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre

Key Learning and Top Tips

The learning from the group is summarised below, with practical advice for other arts centres.

1

Build a Culture of Giving

Individual giving is most effective when it is embedded across the organisation, rather than owned by a single fundraiser or department. Clear leadership was identified as critical, along with shared language, and normalising conversations about giving.

Top tips:

- Make individual giving everyone's business, including front of house staff and trustees
- Provide simple scripts or short training so staff feel confident and comfortable
- Normalise conversations about giving as part of everyday activity
- Celebrate internal fundraising milestones to build confidence and momentum
- Ensure visible leadership support to empower fundraisers to do their job

"We have gained more visibility across the organisation, with more staff teams engaging with the concept of fundraising and more customer-facing colleagues keen to know what they can do to raise funds for the organisation."
The Albany

2

Keep It Simple, Focused and Realistic

Many organisations initially felt pressure to introduce multiple schemes at once. Experience showed that simplicity and focus were key. Doing one thing well - and at the right pace - proved far more effective. Several members underestimated how long implementation would take, and identified that choosing not to launch, or to delay activity until capacity and context were right, was a positive decision.

Fundraising events were effective for some organisations, but consistently required significant senior time, strong relationships and careful scaling. For smaller teams, events were not always the right first step.

Top tips:

- Start with one clear proposition (e.g. donations at checkout, a membership, or a specific appeal)
- Align your approach with organisational priorities and realistic capacity
- Choose timing carefully, such as aligning launches with peak giving periods
- Set realistic deadlines and allow more time than you think you need
- Give yourself permission to pause, delay or not launch if conditions are not right

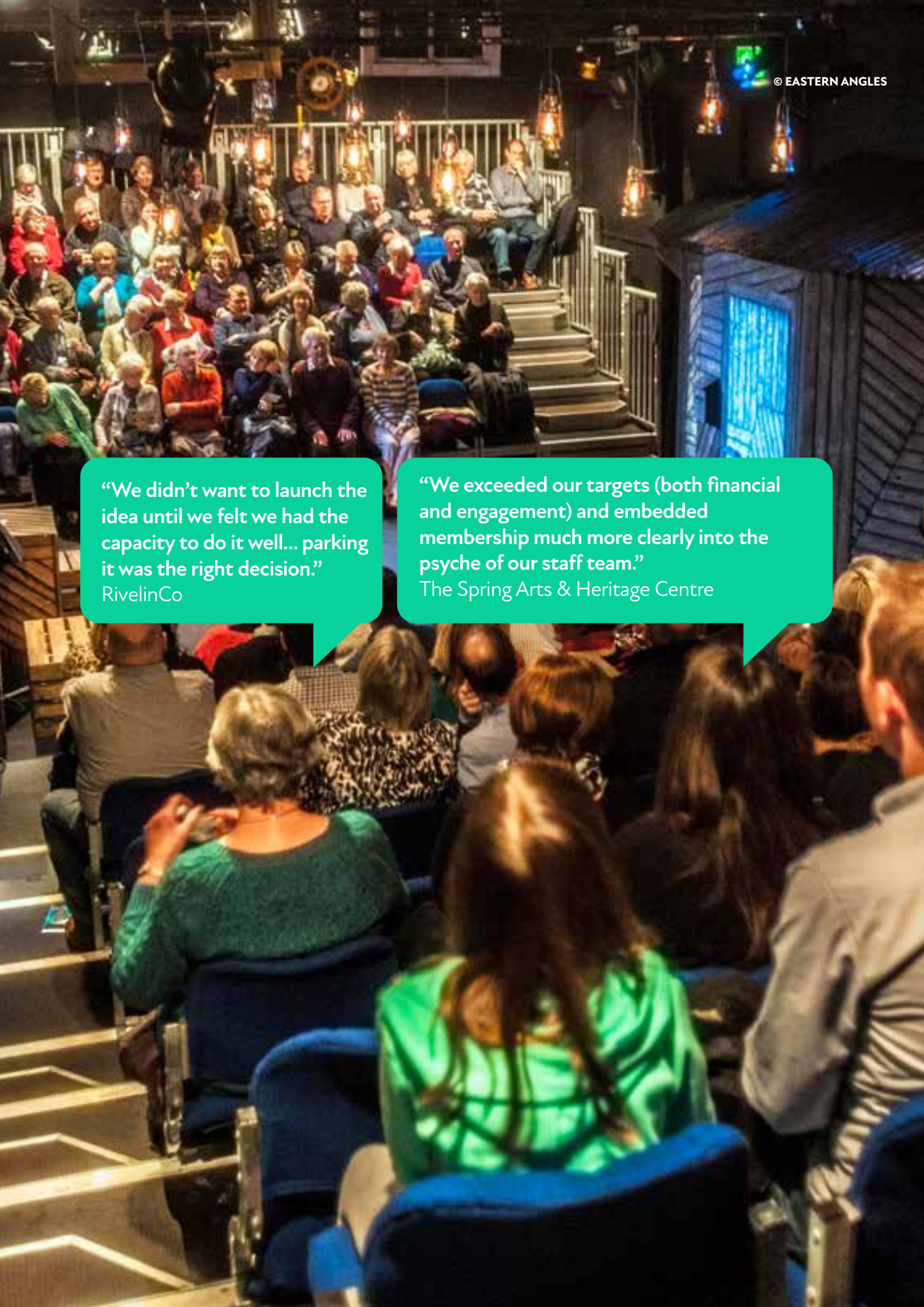
3

Set and Own Clear Targets

The group reflected that being explicit about what success looks like - financially and in terms of engagement - helped focus activity and manage expectations. Modest, achievable targets were often more motivating and sustainable.

Top tips:

- Set clear income and engagement targets from the outset
- Be explicit about who owns these targets internally
- Use proportional benchmarking to set realistic expectations
- Review targets regularly and adjust in response to learning



“We didn’t want to launch the idea until we felt we had the capacity to do it well... parking it was the right decision.”
RivelinCo

“We exceeded our targets (both financial and engagement) and embedded membership much more clearly into the psyche of our staff team.”
The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre

4

Storytelling and Transparency

Audiences responded best when fundraising was framed as an invitation to be part of the organisation's mission. Honest storytelling - including challenges as well as successes - helped build trust and connection.

Several organisations found that focusing too heavily on benefits diluted the case for support. Clear, impact-led messaging about why support mattered was more effective than complex offers.

Top tips:

- Articulate clearly why support is needed and what it enables
- Communicate honestly about financial pressures and real costs
- Focus on impact-led messaging rather than benefits-led offers
- Avoid assumptions about who can or will give
- Use human stories, images, quotes or short films to bring impact to life

“Being clear about what the money was for and the impact it would have made it much easier to communicate the campaign and gave staff confidence in talking about it.”

Dundee Contemporary Arts

5

Stewardship and Thanks

Stewardship emerged as a crucial - and sometimes underestimated - part of individual giving. Personal, thoughtful thank-yous helped build longer-term relationships and encouraged repeat support. Low-level regular giving schemes demonstrated that individual giving does not need to be complex or resource-heavy. These approaches built community and created a base of supporters to draw on for future campaigns.

Top tips:

- Thank donors promptly and personally wherever possible – simple but personal thank yous
- Share regular impact updates, not just further asks
- Invite donors into moments of celebration or behind-the-scenes activity
- Use regular giving to build long-term relationships, not just short-term income

“Low-level giving requires less stewardship, and if you build in the right touch points it can largely run on its own.”

RivelinCo

6

Investment, Systems, Technology and Data

A strong message from the group was that effective individual giving requires investment. Time, systems and infrastructure - particularly CRM and digital tools - are essential enablers, not optional extras. Even where financial investment was modest, organisations saw a clear benefit from improving systems and integrating giving more seamlessly into existing digital journeys, reducing friction for donors and saving staff time.

Participants were clear that individual giving cannot be delivered 'off the side of a desk'. Being realistic about capacity, workload and timescales - and investing accordingly - helped organisations set themselves up for success.

Top tips:

- Accept that you need to spend money and time to make money
- Invest early in systems and infrastructure, particularly CRM and donation platforms
- Integrate donation prompts at multiple points across websites and booking pathways
- Use QR codes and tap-to-donate to increase ease and visibility in your building
- Capture and use data responsibly to understand donor behaviour and improve donor journeys
- Plan realistically for staff capacity, workload and implementation time

"Upgrading website functionality enabled regular donations to happen on our systems."

The Albany



7

Rethinking What Success Looks Like

Participants stressed that success should not be judged on income alone, particularly in the early stages. Cultural change, improved systems, learning and increased confidence were all important outcomes. Participants also reflected that building a community of supporters brings longer-term value beyond immediate income, strengthening relationships, advocacy and future fundraising potential over time.

Top tips:

- Define short-term success measures beyond income
- Recognise cultural change, confidence and learning as valid outcomes
- Share progress and learning internally on a regular basis
- Capture qualitative outcomes as well as financial data

“Successfully trialling campaign-style giving helped grow confidence and understanding across teams, not just income.”

Dundee Contemporary Arts

Common Challenges

Across the group, shared challenges included:

- Limited staff capacity and competing priorities
- Anxiety about audience reactions to fundraising asks
- Fragmented or outdated systems
- Unrealistic expectations around immediate financial return

Engaging boards in individual giving was consistently challenging. While trustees were supportive in principle, translating this into advocacy or giving often required clear leadership, specific asks and structured support.

Peer discussion helped normalise these challenges and reinforced that individual giving is a long-term strategy rather than a quick fix.

Advice for other arts centres

For arts centres considering individual giving, the experience of this group suggests:

- Start where you are, with honesty about capacity and readiness
- Invest time in culture and confidence, not just mechanisms
- Learn from peers and share what works (and what doesn't)
- Allow individual giving to grow incrementally and sustainably

Individual giving is as much about relationships and values as it is about income. When done well, it can strengthen connection with communities and reinforce an organisation's purpose.

Gift Aid

Income from individual giving can be maximised by claiming Gift Aid, a Government tax scheme which allows you to claim 25p every time someone donates £1, within certain parameters.

Gift Aid cannot be claimed on membership schemes that deliver benefits above a certain value, although can be claimed on 'giving' elements of a membership scheme. Under the Small Gifts Scheme, you can also claim Gift Aid on up to £8,000 of unattributed donations (where you don't have the donor's details) per year.

Full details here: <https://www.gov.uk/claim-gift-aid>

Impact for Future Arts Centres

This Action Research Group has informed FAC's ongoing approach to supporting members with earned and contributed income. It reinforced the value of peer learning, reflective space, and practical experimentation, and will shape future programmes focused on financial resilience and creative enterprise.

Appendices:

Case Studies

These case studies reflect organisations working at different scales and stages of developing individual giving. As not all initiatives were fully launched at the time of reporting, the outcomes reflect a mix of early results, process learning and future indicators.



© ALNWICK PLAYHOUSE

Appendix 1

Alnwick Playhouse

Alnwick Playhouse is a vibrant arts centre serving North Northumberland, a rural and economically challenged region in the most sparsely populated county in England. It is the hub of cultural activity in the area, offering 266 & 60 seat theatres/cinemas, rehearsal space, cafe/bar and gallery.

Our mission is to:

- continuously innovate to provide a rich and balanced mix of high-quality professional touring drama, music, dance and film that is informed by our rural demographic
- establish a wide programme of participative activities reflected through the arts forms we present, following the ethos which drives our work: 'If you can experience it, you can do it'

alnwickplayhouse.co.uk

What we aimed to do

Our individual giving campaign focuses on our Schools Go Free initiative. The aim is to ensure that every primary school child in our district receives two cultural visits annually to the Playhouse, including travel and staffing support. This is a cross-artform project targeting approximately 2,700 pupils, including home-educated and privately educated children.

We aim to raise around £60,000 per annum from individual giving to support this initiative, alongside an additional £40,000 from trusts and foundations. We have already raised £20,000 towards the first year. Alongside this, we aim to grow membership to 1,500 by the end of 2026 and convert around 1,000 members into regular individual givers. We are also developing more casual giving opportunities and planning a fundraising dinner with a net target of £10,000.

What we did

We employed a marketing support consultant to develop a membership marketing drive and individual giving plan. We also chose to rebuild our website to improve the delivery of giving prompts and ensure membership is serviced more efficiently. A Schools Liaison Officer (2.5 days per week) was employed to develop the Schools Go Free offer through trial events and wide-ranging consultation with schools and partners.

We began issuing monthly newsletters, though content to promote individual giving is still in development. The Schools Liaison Officer is gathering feedback and testimonials from trial events to support future fundraising campaigns. Alongside this, we have organised a fundraising dinner, developed a centenary book, and launched a commemorative gin product, with profits supporting Schools Go Free. We are also exploring business sponsorship opportunities.

What worked (and what didn't)

The greatest barrier has been the realisation that our website is not sufficiently adaptive to deliver membership and giving messages effectively. This has significantly affected our ability to meet income targets. Work on the membership and individual giving initiative has been delayed as a result.

Staff confidence in promoting membership and giving is currently uneven, and the membership offer has focused more on benefits than on clearly articulating the 'why give' message. There is also limited understanding of the organisation's business model across the staff team, which affects appreciation of the need for income beyond ticket sales and grants.

Outcomes and impact

We have received over £25,000 in individual giving in the past year, including a significant donation linked to Schools Go Free, which has been ring-fenced to fund the trial period. Four trial events engaged over 330 pupils from seven schools, with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

To date, members and donors like the idea of giving to Schools Go Free. The rural nature of our community means that often schools in outlying areas can't afford to get to events.

We are sharing our financial process/business model to the wider team so that there is a deeper understanding of the business' needs.

Our ongoing offer to young/school audiences is paying dividends – schools performances of our Christmas production have sold out. We feel that there is an increased awareness of the Playhouse amongst schools.

Resources and costs

The marketing investment has been about 10% of our present team and 100% of our freelance support, equating to £5,000 in staff costs and £3,000 in freelance costs.

The Schools Liaison Officer role costs £20,000 per annum, and trial events have a budget of £15,000 for the first 12 months. Additional costs for print, social media advertising and membership materials are estimated at £2,000 to date.

Learning and reflections

The fundraising 'ask' needs to be consistent and all staff need to be engaged in delivering a narrative that supports the message around which the individual giving/membership drive is centred. Time needs to be taken to develop the ask and to train staff in how this is to be delivered in the day to day transactions with the community.

The website needs to be designed with this clearly front and centre and the operation of the website needs to be managed by in-house staff.

Key Advice for others: Understand the economics of the strategies, and ensure staff understand the broad economics of the business and how membership and giving features in the business plan. Give yourself time to plan, train staff and develop the project. Have a very clear message.

Next steps

We need to roll out our membership and individual giving messages in a consistent fashion. This will require staff training, website development and amassing evidence of need for the funding of Schools Go Free.

The fundraising dinner next year is being organised by ourselves and Playhouse volunteers/members. The message of giving for the future and Schools Go Free sits at the heart of this event. Developing similar opportunities that connect in a variety of ways with our wider community will be ongoing.

Collecting evidence of the value of/need for Schools Go Free will be a large part of the programme. Ensuring that this is present as a visual/told narrative in the building and in our virtual spaces will be key to the success of the fundraising drive. We are keen to link membership to giving and to grow our conversation with members over the coming years. A consistent delivery of the narrative around Schools Go Free is essential if we are to reframe the reason for the organisation's existence and the need for community support.

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Appendix 2

Barnsley Civic

Barnsley Civic is an independent arts centre located in the heart of Barnsley town centre, South Yorkshire, housed in a large Grade II-listed building with a 398-seat theatre and 60 seat studio theatre, exhibition spaces, hireable spaces and community use spaces. It operates as a charitable trust and Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation, presenting a year-round programme of theatre, music, comedy, dance and visual art exhibitions and events that serve local, regional and wider audiences. Barnsley Civic is committed to accessibility and community engagement and is home to resident theatre company Cross the Sky for learning disabled and autistic adults and LGBTQ+ choir Civic Pride Singers.

What we aimed to do

- Set-up and establish a rolling individual giving scheme from a standing start.
- Develop messaging that highlights our community work in Barnsley, improve signage and make it easier for people to donate – with digital donation terminals, a ‘prompt to donate’ in the ticket-buying journey and training for FOH staff.
- Begin engagement with local businesses to lay the foundations for a corporate donors scheme.
- Be in a position to launch a public donors scheme to coincide with the 150th Anniversary of Barnsley Civic.
- Deliver an inaugural fundraising event with the aim of establishing it on Barnsley’s social calendar.

What we did

Dec 24	Launched individual giving/in person cash donations at pantomime – Marketing team/Operations Team.
Feb 25	Set up digital donations terminal - Head of Communications, Operations Team. Launched Point of Sale donations as part of ticket buying journey.
Apr 25	Tested donation amounts to optimise revenue - Head of Communications.
May/June 25	Developed a partnership pack for the fundraising ball and engaged with local businesses to attract sponsorship and interest- Head of Communications, Board member.
July 25	Commissioned creative agency Peter & Paul to create Civic 150 animation to highlight key moments in Barnsley Civic’s history – Head of Communications, CEO.
Sep 25	Launched tickets for the Sleeping Beauty Winter Ball - Marketing team. Secured £1k sponsorship for the reception drinks from local travel company - Head of Communications.
Oct 25	Planned and organised décor and operational details for event – Head of Operations, General Manager, CEO, Chair of Trustees.
Nov 25	Delivered the Sleeping Beauty Winter Ball, welcoming 70 guests from the business community and public, raised approximately £4,000, worked with resident performer Mark Mark productions for entertainment and debuted Civic 150 animation – All staff team. Follow-up comms to all attendees - Head of Communications. Further testing of POS donation amounts - Head of Communications.

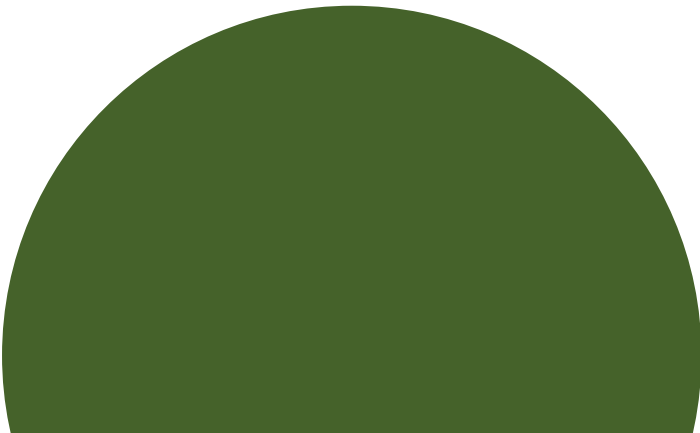


What worked (and what didn't)

Successes:

- Point of sale donations is now a passive income stream and we were able to obtain some data to help optimise donation amounts and messaging
- Fundraising ball covered costs, received positive feedback and began process of engaging with local businesses
- Messaging and communications developed to highlight that Barnsley Civic is a Registered Charity

Challenges:

- Barnsley Civic used to be part of Barnsley Council and there is a still a wide public perception that this is the case. People are rarely willing to donate to their local Council.
 - Donations in the building and at point of sale weren't developed as much as was intended due to lack of time from marketing team.
 - The fundraising event fell on the week before some other similar and well-established events in Barnsley. Our event had to fit in around the programme of shows in the main theatre, so we were restricted to certain dates.
 - There were limited options for event catering in the area which pushed ticket prices up, this may have affected sales as other similar events in Barnsley charge £40-£50, and our tickets were £67.50.
- 

Outcomes and impact

Quantitative:

- Over 500 customers donated online as part of ticket purchasing journey. These can be filtered on the database and contacted. Point of Sale donations raised £1,300 from April to December.
- 63 guests (excluding staff) attended the fundraising ball with £4K revenue generated.
- £1,000 raised in corporate sponsorship for the fundraising ball, with £2,500 also raised for the Pantomime.

Challenges:

- Audiences, customers and local businesses are now more aware of Barnsley Civic's charitable status
- Relationships developed with local businesses through fundraising ball.
- Some key local businesses are providing feedback on plans for the new corporate donors scheme.
- The fundraising ball helped to recruit some new board members.
- We have high quality event photos to help promote the next fundraising ball.
- We have strong digital assets to help launch our 150th anniversary campaign.
- We now have an active stakeholders and supporters database matrix.
- Informal conversations have already taken place around possible sponsorship for the 2026 fundraising ball.

Resources and costs

Time:

- Donations in venue and point of sale: Approx 20 hours throughout the year – Marketing team
- Fundraising ball: This was very resource heavy and became the main-focus of the CEO, Head of Communications, Head of Operations and General Manager for the weeks that built up to it. The Chair of Trustees spent a week before the event assisting with all aspects.

Budget:

- Donations in venue: approximately £200 on signage
- Fundraising ball: (excluding staff time) approx. £6,125 with £10,000 revenue from ticket sales, raffle tickets and silent auction.

In-kind contributions:

- Barnsley Civic residents Mark Mark Productions and Helter Skelter provided their services for free as entertainers at the fundraising ball. They were instrumental in providing a quality event.
- Local businesses, organisations and artists including GXO Logistics, Pulp, Artworks, Barnsley Music Service and Ian McMillan provided items for the silent auction and raffle.

Learning and reflections

As mentioned above, establishing an inaugural fundraising event is very resource heavy and it is essential in year one that guests have a great experience to build for future years. Low-level sponsorship is possible as we demonstrated, but higher-level sponsorship needs a track record and strong relationships.

An unexpected success of the fundraising event was the silent auction, which was outsourced to an external company, raising over £3,000. We supplied some items linked to Barnsley/South Yorkshire, and they supplied a wide range of generic items including experiences, holidays and sporting memorabilia.

Key Advice for others: Fundraising events require a lot of preliminary legwork around establishing relationships with potential corporate partners before approaching them for sponsorship and/or purchasing tickets. It is important to network, get on their radar, offer them free places to something, find out what would be beneficial for them and what they are looking for as part of this process

Next steps

Barnsley Civic is planning to launch its public and corporate supporters schemes in January 2026 to coincide with the 150th anniversary. This preliminary activity, and learning from the FAC cohort has helped to shape our approach to this.

There are plans for another fundraising ball in 2026, taking on board learning around the scheduled date, planning and delivery, and feedback on pricing, whilst capitalising on the relationships that were established.

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CHAPTER ARTS
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Appendix 3

Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

Chapter is an arts centre for world-class, inventive and compelling work and is dedicated to being an inclusive and hospitable civic space and a unique creative hub. Our venue comprises a gallery, artists' studios, theatres, cinema screens, rehearsal and hire spaces, a large central café bar and abundant community garden, complete with Chapter bees.

Each year we welcome about half a million visitors through our doors and offer thousands of activities. Our building is alive with people from morning to night – whether they're visiting a free exhibition, attending a participatory workshop, catching a matinee, or keeping warm over a cup of tea, we aim to offer a safe and convivial space for everyone.

www.chapter.org

What we aimed to do

We applied to take part in Big Give Arts for Impact to raise money via crowdfunding for Deaf Gathering, a Deaf-led festival showcasing Deaf artists across artforms including visual art, theatre, music, dance, comedy and film. It brings together Deaf and hearing audiences, to explore and improve access to creative opportunities and support for health and wellbeing in Deaf communities across Wales.

Our Big Give campaign aimed to help cover the fees of the artists, workshop leaders, filmmakers and speakers involved, and to sustain free-to-attend activity such as the health and wellbeing symposium, BSL-interpreted film screenings, workshops and social events that help reduce the barriers many Deaf people face in accessing creative opportunities and cultural spaces in Wales.

What we did

In discussion with the programme team, the fundraising team submitted an application for Big Give Arts for Impact for Deaf Gathering in December 2024. We also advised all teams at a Senior Management meeting that this had been submitted and that we would need support from everyone to reach our target. Our target was to raise £5,000 ourselves. At the end of January we were told we had been allocated £5,000 in match funding, confirming our participation in the campaign week from 18 – 25 March 2025.

Using templates and guidance from the Big Give and information shared by a previous participant in the campaign, we worked closely with Marketing and Comms to plan a six week comms schedule. This included social media content, email campaigns for existing supporters, and updated donation prompts across the building. We created table-toppers for the café bar, posters for toilet doors, and ensured the campaign featured in weekly Operations meetings.

Staff working with regular suppliers were given template messages inviting donations to send to them, and an all-staff email encouraged colleagues to contribute or share the campaign within their networks. We also prepared a briefing for the February Board meeting, presented by the Co-Directors, asking trustees to donate or circulate the appeal. All activity centred on communicating how donations would help sustain Deaf-led programming, accessible workshops and free-to-attend activity.

What worked (and what didn't)

The Big Give provided a lot of information about how to structure the campaign, which wasn't always possible to implement, but was a very useful place to start planning. The long lead-in time enabled us to plan with other departments such as Marketing & Comms whose involvement was crucial to the activity. We don't have big enough Fundraising or Comms teams to take all their suggestions on board.

We also don't have a board fundraising committee so whilst the full board were informed at a board meeting by the directors there wasn't a board champion for the campaign and we weren't able to know how much information they were circulating. Only one board member actually supported the cause with a cash donation.

Outcomes and impact

Our Big Give campaign generated 139 donations, raising £4,383. Although this was £617 short of our target, with Gift Aid and the match funding the final total was £9,560.50, which we were extremely pleased with.

Of these donations, 25 (18%) came from completely new supporters, 50 (36%) from existing contacts who had not donated before, and 64 (46%) from existing financial supporters. The campaign therefore broadened our donor base while deepening engagement with current audiences.

The funds raised directly supported Deaf Gathering Cymru 2025. The 2024 festival demonstrated the scale of demand and impact this funding will help us continue: it delivered 21 events across four days, with 9 sold out and the remainder reaching or nearing capacity. The festival welcomed new and returning Deaf audiences, with 65 attendees at the health and wellbeing symposium and strong engagement across workshops, film screenings and family activity. Feedback highlighted increased confidence, social connection, and motivation to engage in creative activity and BSL learning.

The campaign also strengthened internal practice, increasing staff awareness of Deaf culture and contributing to ongoing improvements in accessibility, communication support and audience engagement across the organisation.



Resources and costs

The Big Give process spanned around four months, from submitting the application in mid-December to the campaign week in March. The main resource investment was staff time across Fundraising, Marketing & Comms, Programme and Operations. The six-week comms lead-in involved producing social media content, posters, flyers and table-toppers, along with preparing donor emails and staff briefings. Printing materials for in-venue promotion formed the only direct cost.

During the campaign week all donations received personalised thank-you messages, with follow-up thanks sent during the week of the festival the fundraising supported.

No additional project budget was required beyond existing staff capacity and core organisational resources.


Learning and reflections

The actual week when Arts for Impact was live was really nerve-wracking with a constant feeling of worry and watching the website for any new donations. We got 17% of our donations in the first day, then another 22% over the next four days, which led us to believe we weren't going to achieve the target. We then got an additional 61% of donations in the last two days which meant our final amount was respectable, but not a very comfortable experience!

Key Advice for others: Try and get some donors to pledge prior to the week starting so that you can start with a healthy target in the first few days.

Next steps

As it was such a lot of work we felt that it wouldn't be a regular option for fundraising. However we are currently reviewing whether to apply for this year, with a smaller fundraising ask.





DUNDEE CONTEMPORARY ARTS
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Appendix 4

Dundee Contemporary Arts

Dundee Contemporary Arts (DCA) is a multi-arts organisation in the centre of Dundee. Our vision is to enrich lives through art, culture and creativity and we do this through our four programme areas: Exhibitions, Cinema, Print Studio and Learning.

We welcome approximately 300,000 people through our doors each year, and since opening in 1999 we have acted as a cultural and social hub for the city.

Dundee is a small city with a population of 148,000. We have a large student population, with two lively universities, and multiple areas of high deprivation across the city. Over 60s (21%) and Students (21%) each account for high proportions of our ticket sales.

www.dca.org.uk

What we aimed to do

We wished to raise funds from individuals to deliver free creative activities offsite in community settings over the school holidays in 2025. The focus of our individual giving initiative was a time-limited fundraising campaign to raise £5,000.

Activity: Working alongside local partners, we wanted to deliver a programme of creative activities for communities, aimed at those facing economic and social challenges in areas of high deprivation across Dundee.

Initiative: We wanted to encourage individuals to donate towards this activity and wanted to trial using a fundraising campaign. We took part in the Big Give Arts for Impact campaign which allowed us to unlock match funding.

Key objectives of the campaign:

- Raise funds
- Engage new supporters who have never given before
- Strengthen relationships with existing supporters
- Raise awareness of the learning activities happening offsite
- Continue to build a culture of fundraising at DCA
- Test out campaign style giving

What we did

The deadline to apply for the Big Give was 18 December 2024. We found out we were taking part on the 29 January 2025. We began briefing the staff team on the w/c 3rd March and began wider communications on the w/c 10 March. The campaign ran from 18 – 25 March.

DCA's Head of Development led this campaign – developing the strategy, preparing copy for messaging, and communicating with DCA staff and current supporters.

Communications support was vital for this initiative; the Head of Development worked closely with the Deputy Director/Head of External Relations and Communications Manager. The communications team led on preparing and sending all emails and social media and preparing assets for across the building.

Key actions:

- Briefed staff and board prior to campaign week (Development)
- Sent personalised emails to current supporters (Development)
- Published a web story on the local chamber of commerce website (Development)
- Briefed visitors' services team every day on campaign progress (Development)
- To launch the campaign, we produced a video with DCA's Director (Comms)
- Sent emails to DCA Mailing list across the week (Comms)
- Posted about the campaign every day on social media (Comms)
- Published web story on DCA website (Comms)
- Produced posters for areas across DCA (Comms)
- Produced a screen slide for the cinema (Comms)

What worked (and what didn't)

This was a time-consuming initiative. We were fortunate to have a well-resourced Communications team to support.

The timing was challenging. From finding out we would be part of the campaign at the end of January to launching at the start of March, this was a short window.

We wished to raise £5,000 but were only allocated £2,000 in match, thus set our target at £4,000. Ultimately, we exceeded our target and raised £4,719.

The campaign week requires adaptability; we approached our goal earlier than expected and had to adapt our messaging. The DCA team were happy to do this, but it is something to remain aware of.

There were learning moments across the team, e.g. we included a suggested donation amount in an email of £30. Some team members felt this was too high as DCA's average donation is £3. This moment shows how campaign fundraising differs to regular fundraising and the communications needs to reflect this.

Outcomes and impact

Quantitative

- Exceeded target – raised £4,719 plus Gift Aid.
- 87 supporters, average donation £31 and largest £200.
- Increased the level of donation from previous supporters: 45% are previous supporters and this is their largest gift.
- Activated new donors: 32% had previous contact with DCA but this was their first gift and 6% are completely new to DCA.

Qualitative

- Raised awareness of our offsite work in communities amongst audiences.
- Successfully trialled campaign style giving.
- Development and Communications teams worked collaboratively on the initiative. This felt successful and helped to grow understanding of fundraising comms within DCA.
- Good feedback from the DCA Visitor Services team. It seemed that the team were enthused about the campaign and liked asking for donations for a specific project.

Resources and costs

It has been challenging to estimate time but below are some thoughts. These are likely to be underestimations:

- Head of Development: 20 hours
- Director: 1 hour
- Deputy Director/ Head of External Relations: 3 hours
- Communications Manager/Communications Assistant: 10 hours

Total: 34 hours

This campaign was balanced alongside other fundraising and communications priorities. I found the campaign was continually in the back of my mind for the two months I was working on it in a concentrated way.

In terms of budget, this was very minimal. We did all design work, filming and printing in house, and so the only costs were staff time.

Learning and reflections

Start preparing earlier. For our next campaign I would begin working with the Communications team earlier and start building support amongst the Senior Management Team and Board at the point of application.

It would be great to excite the Board more during the next campaign and clearly outline the important role they play in spreading the word and/or donating themselves.

Audiences respond well to their donation being doubled.

Video content was effective at connecting with audiences.

The Arts for Impact campaign is a particularly good campaign to get started with, as charities can apply for match funding and do not have to secure this match themselves.

We used very simple and plain language copy across the campaign. We wanted to make sure the project was very easy to understand, and that people could latch on to the idea. We were clear about impact, and had some figures included also. This has impacted how we try to communicate about learning projects more generally. Examples below:

‘In the school holidays, many families facing economic challenges have limited access to free, fun activities for their little ones. With your help we can fix this!’

‘If 10 people donate £30, we will reach our target. Remember every donation is doubled, which means double the impact!’

‘With your support we will provide free, fun and accessible creative activities for over 1,000 children and their families across Dundee over the school holidays.’

‘By supporting this project, you will help to improve the health and wellbeing of children across Dundee.’

Key Advice for others: Give it a go! It is a great way to activate new donors and build awareness in your audiences but don’t underestimate the time involved!



Next steps

We have been carefully thanking our Big Give donors across 2025 and updating them on the impact of their support. This will conclude with a 'Thank you' event in December, for all our supporters, where we hope to convert several one-off donors to DCA Friends (£250 per year).

We are hoping to take part in the Big Give Arts for Impact campaign again in 2026. We plan to raise funds for our children's film festival – Discovery Film Festival. We will aim to have a higher target this year.

We will aim to get pledges lined up in advance of the campaign, to get a head start to the fundraising. I will try to activate our Board and current supporters more, through earlier communications and more direct asks.

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Appendix 5

Eastern Angles

Eastern Angles Theatre Company is a professional charitable theatre organisation based in Ipswich, Suffolk, with additional activity in Peterborough and extensive touring across Essex, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Suffolk.

Founded in 1982, the company delivers new writing and community-engaged theatre to rural towns, village halls and community venues, alongside work at the Eastern Angles Arts Centre in West Ipswich.

Eastern Angles combines touring theatre with community programmes, youth theatre, site-specific work and engagement projects rooted in local heritage and place. Its audiences include rural and under-served communities, families, schools, intergenerational participants and general public audiences who may otherwise have limited access to professional cultural activity. The organisation's work prioritises inclusion, access and long-term community impact.

easternangles.co.uk

What we aimed to do

Our individual giving initiative was designed as a strategic overhaul of the legacy support schemes inherited when the current leadership team began reshaping Eastern Angles. Historically, there were two separate branches of giving that were largely focused on specific artistic outputs and individual productions. While this was valuable, it did not fully reflect the charitable breadth of our work — including our community engagement programmes, youth theatre, rural touring, heritage-embedded storytelling and inclusive participation activities.

We therefore chose to unite these strands into a single, coherent individual giving scheme under the brand ‘Get Closer to the Theatre You Love.’ This brand communicates the emotional and participatory connection we seek to foster between supporters and the organisation, encouraging people to give not just to shows, but to the impact our work has in places where culture is scarce.

The focus of the initiative was to:

- Clarify and strengthen the identity of individual giving in a way that aligns with our charitable purposes
- Build a sustainable supporter base invested in our long-term mission
- Celebrate the full scope of our work, including community programmes, youth engagement and rural touring

In addition, we planned to introduce a summer Gala fundraising event to broaden participation and profile-raising opportunities. This event would serve both to thank donors and attract new supporters. Alongside the gala, we aimed to develop a series of pay-to-attend professional development activities, drawing on staff expertise, offering individuals and organisations the chance to “develop your practice” through workshops, masterclasses and artist-led sessions. These activities provide valuable learning opportunities while also contributing to our diversified income strategy.

Together, these elements were designed to deepen connection with supporters, articulate the value of culture in everyday life, and generate the resources needed to sustain and expand Eastern Angles’ creative and community work.

What we did

The individual giving initiative was delivered through a coordinated programme of leadership, branding, systems development and public-facing activity, led by the CEO and supported by staff, trustees and partners.

The CEO led the initiative overall, working closely with a trustee with a professional background in fundraising to review and overhaul the existing membership criteria. This ensured the new scheme aligned with best practice in donor engagement and more accurately reflected Eastern Angles' charitable mission. The CEO dedicated approximately two days per week over a 2–3 month period to shaping the strategy, messaging and delivery plan.

The CEO worked with the Marketing team to develop a new individual giving brand, launched alongside the organisation's redesigned website. The site was intentionally built to be more user-friendly and to guide audiences clearly towards supporting the charity. New functionality was introduced into the ticket-buying journey, including:

- an optional donation prompt at point of purchase
- a higher-priced "charity ticket" that included a built-in donation.

These changes embedded giving into the audience experience rather than positioning it as a separate activity.

Marketing worked closely with the CEO to create a new investment document outlining annual statistics, charitable activity and impact. This document also marked the formal launch of Eastern Angles' organisational values, Grow, Nourish and Wonder, with a joint foreword from the CEO and Chair of Trustees, reinforcing leadership commitment and organisational clarity.

The initiative culminated in the delivery of a summer Gala fundraising event. Preparation took approximately three months, with the venue prepared through a five-day intensive supported by 20–30 in-kind contributors. The CEO directed the gala performance, while the Engagement team supported delivery through a Youth Theatre contribution, ensuring the event reflected both artistic excellence and community impact.

Overall, the initiative was CEO-led, strategically embedded across departments, and designed to create sustainable, organisation-wide approaches to fundraising and supporter engagement.



What worked (and what didn't)

The initiative demonstrated strong organisational commitment and collective effort. The goodwill and dedication of staff were significant strengths, particularly as the work was delivered alongside already demanding workloads. Clear communication around the financial impact of the initiative, including improved budget lines and quantitative reporting, helped build staff confidence and morale by showing how fundraising directly supported programmes.

The relaunch of individual giving came at a critical time, coinciding with a £20,000 reduction in local authority funding. The initiative successfully helped offset this loss and contributed towards sustaining Eastern Angles' community engagement programme. The delivery of the gala fundraising event was a notable success, both financially and reputationally, and demonstrated the organisation's ability to generate income through high-quality artistic and community-led activity. Strategic pricing decisions required confidence and careful judgement, but ultimately proved effective.

The main challenge was capacity. Delivering the initiative placed additional pressure on staff time, particularly in a period of organisational change. Monitoring memberships, renewals and donor relationships is time-intensive and highlighted the need for dedicated resource. As CEO, balancing this work alongside other strategic and operational priorities was at times difficult.

Timing was also a factor, with fundraising activity needing to be developed rapidly in response to funding reductions. This required decisiveness and resilience, particularly when setting ticket prices for the gala and committing resources in advance of confirmed income.

Overall, the experience reinforced the importance of sustainable staffing structures and systems to support long-term fundraising growth.

Outcomes and Impact

The introduction of a renewed individual giving strategy has resulted in a significant increase in voluntary income over a relatively short period.

Total donations more than doubled year-on-year, rising from £11,367 at 31 March 2024 to £24,525 at 31 March 2025. This upward trajectory has continued into the current year, with donations standing at £9,562 as of January 2026.

The refreshed Friends scheme also showed strong growth. Income increased from £909 at 31 March 2024 to £3,501 by 31 March 2025, and has continued to rise to £6,361 as of January 2026. This demonstrates both improved engagement and increased confidence in the organisation's charitable mission.

Introducing bucket collections at the end of Christmas performances proved particularly effective. During A Christmas Carol (2024–25), bucket donations totalled £7,635, while Treasure Island (2025–26) has raised £3,200 to date, with further performances still to come.

The inaugural Garden Gala fundraising event also delivered a positive return. With a total cost of £664, the event generated £3,145, demonstrating strong value for money and potential for future development.

Collectively, these figures evidence a successful shift towards diversified income streams and a growing culture of giving among audiences and supporters, helping to mitigate reductions in local authority funding and support the sustainability of Eastern Angles' community-focused work.

Resources and costs

The delivery of our individual giving and fundraising activity required the equivalent of approximately four days per week of staff time. This covered ongoing Friends scheme monitoring, donor communications, reporting, and the preparation of funding applications. The CEO absorbed much of this workload alongside existing responsibilities, highlighting both the commitment required and the importance of future dedicated fundraising capacity.

All campaign materials were designed in-house, maximising value for money and ensuring consistency with our brand. We utilised our existing marketing budget, allocating £1,500 for targeted business advertising to support visibility and audience reach.

Fundraising events were produced entirely in-house and relied heavily on community goodwill. Eastern Angles benefits from a strong volunteer base of 45 active volunteers, who supported event delivery and logistics. Staff networks also played a vital role, with partners contributing in-kind support, including catering for the gala event. Local artists generously donated their time and talent, and a local business provided free printing services.

This combination of staff time, volunteer engagement and in-kind contributions significantly increased the return on investment and strengthened community ownership of the organisation's fundraising activity.

Learning and reflections

One of the most significant insights from developing our individual giving programme is how closely it is linked to effective marketing and clear storytelling. Strengthening the Friends scheme has directly contributed to increased subscriptions and repeat engagement, particularly when supporters clearly understand the charitable impact of their contribution rather than seeing it as a transactional exchange.

We learned that it is far more effective to under-promise and over-deliver. Friends and members respond positively when they feel valued, informed and pleasantly surprised, rather than over-sold to. This approach has helped build trust and long-term loyalty.

Unexpectedly, reducing tangible rewards proved beneficial. By moving away from physical incentives and focusing instead on the idea that supporters are helping meet the needs of others, we saw a deeper emotional connection to the organisation's mission. Supporters were motivated by impact, not perks.

The process also highlighted the importance of robust systems. As income grew, we needed to improve our tracking and data management for memberships, renewals and donations. Investing time in better systems has been essential for sustainability.

Finally, the scale of growth reinforced the need for dedicated capacity. The creation of a new Development and Partnerships Officer role reflects our learning that individual giving requires focused, ongoing attention to thrive.

Key Advice for others: Start with values, not benefits. Build an offer rooted in trust, clarity and impact, and ensure you have the systems and capacity in place to nurture relationships consistently over time.

Next steps

Eastern Angles will strengthen and adapt our approach by investing in long-term sustainability, partnerships and income diversification. The appointment of a Development and Partnerships Officer (0.8 FTE, four days per week) for an 18 month fixed-term, is a strategic step in enabling this next phase of growth.

This role will work closely with the CEO to expand fundraising capacity, manage and grow our individual giving scheme, and develop new income streams that support our artistic and community ambitions. By embedding this capacity within the organisation, we will be better equipped to respond to a challenging funding landscape while protecting access to free and low-cost cultural activity.

Crucially, the role will also focus on deepening partnerships within local communities, including schools, local authorities, voluntary sector organisations and heritage partners. This will allow us to co-design projects that are responsive to local need, strengthen our presence in areas of deprivation and rural isolation, and ensure our work continues to reflect the voices and stories of the communities we serve.

Together, this investment will help Eastern Angles build on its existing strengths while creating a more resilient, connected and outward-looking organisation for the future.

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© KINGS PLACE MUSIC FOUNDATION

Appendix 6

Kings Place Music Foundation

Kings Place Music Foundation (KPMF) is the lead arts tenant in the building, Kings Place. Based in King's Cross, London, we run the artistic programme of events at Kings Place, sharing the venue with a conferencing partner and several other organisations including The Guardian. KPMF has a team of approximately 35 salaried staff and a further 30+ contracted staff working in FOH and BOH.

Our programme covers classical, folk, jazz and spoken word events, our typical audience profile are 1) Greater London based 2) Caucasian 3) 50+. A focus for KPMF in the next few years is to build our community profile through increased free space in kind, our Community Club ticket scheme, Young Artist Platforms and professional development workshops.

www.kingsplace.co.uk

What we did

My focus was the relaunch of an updated membership scheme that would introduce a pipeline of support that would build towards an eventual major donor strategy. My plans were:

- To relaunch a refreshed scheme from January 2025
- Update the communications strategy including
 - New branding for digital and physical assets
 - Refreshed messaging in the venue
 - New physical materials including leaflets and programme brochure ads
 - Trigger content that aligned with our new marketing segmentation strategy, including welcome journey content and customer loyalty upsells
- Launch an upgrade campaign with existing supporters
- Launch a prospect campaign with database segmentation based on booking and donation history
- Explore new in-person fundraising opportunities such as a fundraising dinner

What we aimed to do

To relaunch a refreshed scheme from January 2025

I delayed the launch until February 2025 due to challenges KPMF were facing regarding Gaza and conferencing income. I didn't want to launch the scheme in the face of bad press that might have a negative impact on those interested in supporting us. I was encouraged to retain the original 100% donation form for memberships, but ultimately this limited what new benefits I could offer.

Update the communications strategy

I worked with our freelancer designer to create a new branding identity for memberships which could be used across our physical and digital assets. This branding was used across the new digital and vinyl posters, on our physical brochures and across all digital banner ads in our audience newsletters. Updated messaging pushed the cost benefits of becoming a member and focused more on our growing work with the community. I was able to include branded banner style ads in concert programmes for some events. Finally, I worked with the Marketing team to draft and design content to be included in their newsletter strategy that reached audiences upon sign up through the post-attendance comms.

Launch an upgrade campaign with existing supporters

I included upgrade messaging in all renewal comms for supporters, however, very few upgraded their existing support. I also mentioned the refreshed scheme at all in-person opportunities, such as donor meetings and supporter events. I was also able to research a small selection of donors for a more personalised upgrade strategy based on their capacity and affinity to give.

Launch a prospect campaign with database segmentation based on booking and donation history

This was not achieved in the way I had originally hoped, which was to overlay the newsletter segmentation strategy with additional comms engaging audiences. Instead, I focused on targeted segmentation leading up to major announcements such as a new series of events going on sale.

Explore new in-person fundraising opportunities such as a fundraising dinner

Alongside the memberships, I started to focus on programme based funding opportunities for individuals, such as our commissioning work. I hosted our first on-stage fundraising dinner to raise funds for our commissioning – donors would receive behind the scene access including rehearsals, Q&As and tickets to see the world-premiere concert. I've committed this against a 5 year strategy to raise at least £60,000 and the dinner was a resounding success in its first year. Invites were shared with existing supporters and prospects through Trustees only, to begin building the commissioning circle with those who already knew us.

What worked (and what didn't)

Successes:

- Inaugural fundraising dinner bringing together our first commissioning circle and developing a strategy to deliver this work across the next 5 years
- Improved branding alignment that means our membership scheme stands out and is recognisable across the building and online
- Preparations to move to a new CRM system that will offer easier membership admin management, leading to greater potential with auto renewal comms that will free up my time to focus on major donor fundraising and away from my 'officer level' admin tasks
- Growing trust with our conferencing team to access their public audiences i.e. bar purchases and funding comms for the charity in their spaces

Challenges:

- In September I became a team of one with no confirmed plans yet to replace the Development Director or recruit a manager level role that will focus on Trusts/ membership and events admin
- Delayed organisational strategy means our comms do not feel aligned, can often be mismatched with what we want to present ourselves as
- Timing priorities change when the conference backlash became public

Outcomes and impact

Since the launch in February 2025:

- 15 new supporters have joined to the value of £3,040 a year
- This includes one of our Trustees joining as a member, meaning 50% of our Board are supporters
- By March 2025, we saw a 98% member retention rate of renewals
- As of November 2025, we have 124 Friends & Patrons, with 26 ending their support since the scheme launched (this includes 7 who joined then ended their membership before the first payment was taken)
- Member events have continued to offer new ways for supporters to engage with KMPE, including rehearsal access, Q&As and an upcoming post-concert reception celebrating the festive season
- Several supporters have chosen to increase their support within the price boundaries of their existing membership i.e. increasing to £200 a year from £120
- The Contessa Fund Commissioning Circle launched with a successful on-stage dinner, identifying new prospects for additional support from our members on top of their existing giving
- More focused programme support is being identified i.e. Young Artist Platforms, that will open new opportunities for supporters to give in a more specific way

Resources and costs

The original budget for 2025-26 was £3,000 for the year, to mainly cover the costs of event delivery and trial new materials for membership. I lobbied for an additional £8,000 to cover the cost of the fundraising dinner, receiving a further £3,500 in sponsorship to support the catering costs for it.

Time wise, recent months have been about trying to navigate the expectations of becoming a team of one delivering the work of two, and managing all the tasks of what I first did as a fundraising officer and still doing that now as a Head of Development because additional investment hasn't been given to support that element of the work yet, though it is under discussion, which would allow me to focus more on the bigger areas of income potential for us. Particularly now, I joined knowing my role would be 100% focussed on IG, but now it's roughly 60% IG, 20% Corporate and 20% Trusts (but the expected delivery is still 100% across all).



Learning and reflections

Rolling out the delivery can take longer than initially planned, other priorities come up and can impact your own goals. The challenge to overcome is how to navigate this so that you can realistically stay on track, but also produce something you are really happy with.

As someone leading on this work pretty much solo, it was a lot of pressure to deliver a good product. Finding a balance to deliver this, alongside other emerging priorities encouraged by the Board, meant I often struggled to fully dedicate myself to everything really well. I reckon I achieved what I did with 75% satisfaction, which is why I am looking at another refresh in with the new opportunities that present themselves with our change of CRM.

Finally, it has been invaluable leaning on and taking inspiration from others.

Key Advice for others: Creating a strategy and delivering the work often takes longer than we think it does. Plan in this time and plan for delays so that it doesn't come as a surprise to you and the wider team.

Next steps

Tying in to the move towards a new CRM in early 2025, I am taking this opportunity to refresh our membership scheme based on the engagement to date and also ensure we can align ourselves with the new policies around cost management for the benefit delivery. This will very likely mean moving to a split scheme that shows the benefit/donation cost, rather than pushing for it to be fully Gift Aidable. Rising costs to deliver the benefits means it can be a challenge to stay within the boundaries.

I'll also make use of the better upselling opportunities with the CRM, to push targeted donation asks and membership nudges as we will also be moving newsletter systems. I have plans to create a new comms strategy that is triggered by audience engagement and will not rely on the Marketing team to have their new strategy in place.

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RIVELINCO
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Appendix 7

RivelinCo, Sheffield

RivelinCo is based in Hillsborough, and we work across North Sheffield. Our arts centre is a transformed former shop front, and many of our activities and events take place out and about in public and community spaces. We are a relatively small organisation (3 FTE staff and approx. £200-250k turnover) and we've been running for almost 5 years. We work specifically in historically under-resourced areas in North Sheffield, often on the edge of the city and often in the lowest 0-20% on the indices of multiple deprivation. We primarily work with marginalised communities.



What we aimed to do

We originally intended to set up a formalised individual giving scheme, to bring together the ad hoc donations we currently receive, increase the number of donors, and shout about what we do. We were particularly interested in low-level giving, because we feel it's most appropriate for the areas we work in and the communities we work with, but we also wanted to allow space for people to give more if they wanted to or were able to. We were also interested in exploring alternative versions of individual giving, for example a 50/50 style scheme where some of the money goes to other grassroots projects in the community.

What we did

We did some initial research into 50/50 schemes and how they're currently used (primarily as a type of raffle at sports events). We've developed a business case for how this might work in future, but for now we've parked the 50/50 option (see below).

We instead pivoted to a focus on our 5th birthday in 2026, and building a formalised individual scheme around this, along the lines of £5 for 5 years, encouraging regular low-level giving with no upper limit, in a similar style to our pay what you can approach to most ticketing. We invested in some back-end changes to our website to make this possible directly via Stripe without a third party like Donorbox, which is what we currently use. We also applied for and received some funding from Sheffield City Council to support this work, and now we're working with an independent advisor to help us build the PR campaign we need to make it a success. We hope to launch in February 2026, at the same time as our new space opens.

We also tried adding 'recommended' donations to our pay what you can tickets (rather than them starting as free and selecting to pay) which has seen a higher return, and we tried corporate sponsorship for the first time for our summer festival. The latter was free other than staff time, but the staff time required was significant and we did not have capacity to do much follow-up which this type of work really requires. We therefore only received donations from businesses who were very keen to support us, and likely could have doubled or tripled donations if we'd had more capacity for this work.

What worked (and what didn't)

We still really believe in the 50/50 scheme idea for future, but we've parked it for now for two reasons:

- an opportunity arose to move to a new space, but this comes at a bigger cost than our current space, so we needed to prioritise earned income and our 5th birthday felt like a useful opportunity for this
- We didn't want to launch the idea until we felt we had the capacity to do it well. We're going to continue developing it and when we hire a new member of staff in the summer, it will free up more of our Director's time to focus on this. It will require significant additional work to deliver properly, including panels and coordination of applications etc. We may also need to have a discussion with the Charities Commission

Challenges:

Across the team we find it very difficult to ask for money. This is mainly because of where we work and who we work with. But actually it's important we don't make sweeping assumptions and lots of people do want to give, we see this through our pay what you can ticketing. We just need to make sure there are low-level giving options to make it accessible for more people. We need to improve staff confidence to ask in the coming months ahead of the new scheme launch, and we intend to include some training around this for the whole team, including casual/FOH staff etc.

Time and capacity are always difficult – we're so small, so often changes like staff sickness, or this year a premises move, make a significant impact on capacity, particularly for senior leadership as we're often then suddenly involved much more in delivery. That's why we need a no-fuss scheme, no bells and whistles, which is what we've tried to design for now – rather than overcomplicating it.

Successes:

It was great to see a fairly immediate return from the two initial changes we implemented (sponsorship and a change to the process for pay what you can), and this has also given us some hope for the campaign. The story about our move has been well received by local people, and we hope this storytelling will develop into donors when we're ready to launch.

Research into what other organisations and festivals ask in terms of sponsorship was very useful for benchmarking, and it was helpful to talk ideas through with the rest of the group – I think this helped us feel safe to try new things where perhaps we might not have done before.

Outcomes and impact

This is a bit hard for us to answer for this scheme at the moment! Our original launch plan was November but we've pushed back to 2026 to tie it in with our 5th birthday and the opening of our new space.

- Pay what you can ticket donations – up by around 20% since changes
- 6x festival sponsorships compared to 0 for the same event in 2023

Resources and costs

Initial research – Director and Board, approx 4-8 hours, in kind

Development of business case – Director and SMT, approx 8 hours, in kind

Website work – Director and web developers, approx 16 hours, £1,260

Creation of new IG scheme package and PR/branding, Director, SMT, Board, approx 40 hours (anticipated)

Consultant to support IG campaign in 2026, £900


Launch and stewardship, Director and whole team, TBC

Of the above costs, Sheffield City Council funding paid for the infrastructure work on the website to bring donations in-house (£1,260) and 2x days' consultant time (£900) as part of an organisational development support grant.

Learning and reflections

Some reflections on low-level giving schemes:

- They require less stewardship than larger donors, so if you're able to build in certain touch points to increase numbers, they can sort of run on their own outside of that.
- Open ended is good rather than limiting people to specific numbers. We set a lowest level per month/year but with no upper limit.
- For the first month we're not counting much IG income in our targets for the year, so we can test the new model without too much pressure. We'll have targets for staff, but the business won't thrive or fail based on this income initially.
- Useful ways for us to attract donors is to say what each amount will pay for, e.g. £5 will buy lunch for an older participant at X workshop etc, because we can't really offer 'hard benefits' like early ticket releases or money off. Our programme varies so much season to season that it would be pretty much impossible to offer this in a 'membership' style scheme.
- We chose not to be a membership organisation and to split IG from governance. This is a choice that works for us because we have other ways of engaging people with cultural democracy and co-design, but we can absolutely see how the alternative is a good approach for others.



People are most interested in supporting specific engagement work e.g. young people's groups, older people's groups etc – these feel tangible and easier to describe than some of our other work. We are able to make suggestions about what e.g. £10 could support, while still ensuring all donations via the scheme are unrestricted which helps with sustainability. Our other aim coming out of this group is to find the time to consider patrons and/or well-known larger donors that would also help with PR. We are very close to the football club, so are going to look into famous fans and write some letters...!

Key Advice for others: The main learning so far is it takes much more time than you think to set it up in a way it can run 'on its own' or with minimal involvement later. I underestimated the time commitment. But it is worth it!

Next steps

We will be launching our scheme in 2026, as part of our 5th birthday celebrations and the opening of our new space. It will run throughout the year, with a few PR moments. Aim is to reach minimum £6,000 in the first year of IG sign-ups (approx 100 people giving min £5 per month).

We will further develop plans for a 50/50 scheme/add-on after recruitment of a new member of staff (management level) in summer 2026. We will also be focusing much more time and capacity on event sponsorship for our Midsummer Festival 2027, and starting this much earlier (likely start in Autumn 2026, versus starting in March when the festival was in June this year).

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THE ALBANY
© INES YEARWOOD SANCHEZ

Appendix 8

The Albany, Deptford

The Albany is a multi-arts centre and cultural hub in Deptford, South East London, with a 500-capacity theatre, studios, meeting rooms, community café and garden, and 25 office spaces to host community groups. We serve a vibrant, creative, and economically marginalised community. In our local area, 74% of residents are non-white and nearly half were born outside of England.

We run productions and participation programmes across many art forms, and for all ages, spanning theatre, music, dance, circus, and spoken word, all underpinned by co-production and mental health work. Last year, we welcomed more than 28,000 people to inclusive performances, workshops, and festivals.

www.thealbany.org.uk

What we aimed to do

Our ambition for Individual Giving was to increase unrestricted giving from individuals at the Albany. Encouraging supporters to give to the Albany on a monthly basis so that we could predict income and create a more loyal audience for larger more focussed campaigns in time. We had a dual aim of raising income and raising visibility of the Albany as a Charity.

No individual was giving to the organisation on a regular basis.

We identified that as a venue we struggled to have 'perks' for supporters as our programming is varied. Our wider teams were also reluctant to discount ticketing and/or our F&B offer as both are affordable. We created a 'pick 'n mix' style of unrestricted individual giving scheme, which allows each individual supporter to curate their own supporter experience or engagement journey with the Albany. Alongside this we have softly launched Albany Anchors for individuals to join for £1,000+ per annum.

What we did

We have a Development Team of 1.8FTE including the Development Director/Deputy CEO and a Fundraising Coordinator. Over the past year we have made Individual Giving a part of the Fundraising Coordinator role.

Individual Giving is now part of the team target and is a deliverable in FY. We also engaged our Trustees in IG asking to share and donate themselves.

We created new messaging and leaflets in the building, which was limited. We now have posters in A Frames when shows are not on and some posters in the toilets (our community loos!).

Upgraded website functionality (twice!) enabled regular donations to happen on our systems, and worked with Marketing closely to deliver a brand new website for the Albany and in turn new fundraising messaging. We also have dynamic content in our donor stewardship, meaning each thank you from the Development Team is automatically bespoke to their interests.

Inspired by others as part of this cohort, we created a voiceover to play pre performances, and created a special Christmas ask before our Christmas family show.



What worked (and what didn't)

Team buy-in has been great, particularly with marketing and we're integrating well ensuring fundraising asks are in mail-outs etc. The new PECR legislation will aid this more, growing the number of individuals on our mailing list we can directly contact specifically about fundraising.

The concept of My Albany was too complicated and we've simplified through the year. We've had limited uptake of the scheme (although have not had any direct marketing support yet) but are looking to officially launch in the new year.

We have made light touch interventions i.e. the website, voiceover and language updates which means that we can observe before scaling anything in particular.

Outcomes and impact

Despite a slow start to our interventions over the past 12 months we have increased unrestricted donations by 46% to £3,027 over the past 12 months (from £2,065 Dec 23/Dec 24) through regular giving and donate now functionality through the website. We have six regular givers contributing between £5-£20 per month.

We have gained more visibility across the organisation with more staff teams engaging with the concept of fundraising at the Albany with more customer-facing colleagues keen to know what they can do to raise funds for the organisation.

Resources and costs

£300+VAT for design and print.

Voiceover time has been in kind.

It is impossible to calculate how much time has gone into the project, but 1 day per month from the Fundraising Coordinator and 0.5 days per month by Fundraising Director as well as 0.5 days per month from our head of Communications and Marketing.



Learning and reflections

It has been a journey for the team. It's been a low priority project which has meant that we have had low momentum. It has been hard to make time and maintain energy for the project. We have also struggled with the project not having one key owner, it really needs to be a core part of someone's job with the allowance of time when the ROI is going to be very low to start with which is difficult when Trusts and Foundations continue to be the core voluntary income source for our organisation.

Having a 'scheme' has made it easier to direct people when they ask – how can I help? And, in particular we have found shifting donations to focus more unrestricted (rather than restricted projects) has been really effective and means we can direct income to where we need it most.

This week we had our first out of the blue £1,000 donation which was a real win for the team and boosted morale.

Key Advice for others: Look widely at other organisations and see what could be cherry picked or your own context. The advantage of the FAC Action Research Group meant that I was surrounded by colleagues from across the UK who worked in different contexts to me in London but large or small there were certain things they were testing that could potentially work here at the Albany.

Next steps

We will be launching a focussed campaign in the new year. We'll be also profiling the benefits of supporting the Albany regularly as offering chances to engage with the team through events/activity, as well as considering other benefits for higher givers and ensuring supporting the Albany is a core call to action throughout our programming.

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THE SPRING
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Appendix 9

The Spring Arts & Heritage Centre, Havant

The Spring is a small-scale arts & heritage centre that through arts, creativity and culture, empowers the people of Havant and beyond to discover new ideas, learn new skills and find new futures.

Our hub, for creativity, learning and cultural opportunities for the community and beyond, is based in Havant Town and home to a 145 seat studio theatre, museum collection, workshop spaces and art studio.

We also have key focuses on creative wellbeing; place-making; children, young people and families; and opening up of the creative industries.

www.thespring.co.uk



What we aimed to do

We wanted to take the opportunity to review and refresh our membership scheme and our patrons scheme. The Spring is a membership organisation and the terms of the scheme was last updated in 2016 and no changes had been made since, including to the membership fee. The patrons scheme had been launched in 2016 and subsequently refreshed in 2019, but was aligned with the previous leadership team's strategy.

Our ambition was to review the current schemes; seek feedback and input from trustees, members, patrons, staff and audiences; define a way forward; set financial and engagement targets; put in a timeframe; and launch the two refreshed schemes. We then planned to monitor and measure success which would influence further development work.

We had a core intention that this activity would form part of the creation of a new organisational individual strategy.

What we did

The project was led by our Executive Director but trustees, the finance team and the marketing and comms team were all involved.

Research about other membership schemes was undertaken – both within the arts and heritage sector and where appropriate, more widely. Small focus groups with staff, members and trustees were held.

We looked at introducing financial discounts as part of the membership but after doing the analysis we recognised that this was something we couldn't afford to do. Instead we leant into redefining the members booking window and making it exclusive for members with limits in place on how many tickets could be booked by members through the booking window.

In October 2024 we presented our revised scheme to the trustee board and it was agreed. We then focused on the comms of the scheme changes – both internally with our wider staff team as well as externally to existing members, and then updated all our membership marketing and comms. From January 2025 the new scheme went live.

What worked (and what didn't)

Successes were very clear. We exceeded our targets (both financial and engagement) and embedded membership much more clearly into the psyche of our staff team. We also simplified it, which was useful for all involved.

One of the main challenges was staff capacity and ensuring it remained top of the agenda. Being part of the FAC IG action research group was immensely useful as it held us accountable in a really positive way and ensured regular energy and focus on the work.

We are a membership organisation so whilst the refresh worked really well for us in increasing members, particularly as a result of introducing the exclusive members booking window, what it hasn't done is increase engagement on the governance side of the membership. Attendance at our 2025 AGM was similar to our 2024 AGM with most of the attendees being longstanding members.

Outcomes and impact

The refreshed scheme was met with complete positivity and warmth, we did not receive any complaints or negative comments and actually it was welcomed by members.

Ticket sales increased as a result of the introduction of the exclusive booking window.

Since November 2024 we have increased our membership numbers by 48% and we will comfortably exceed our 25/26 financial target. The target was £4,000 and our forecast EOY position is £4,832.

From a qualitative perspective there is a better understanding of The Spring and why you might become a member and a greater awareness and understanding of the membership scheme within staff and trustees.

Resources and costs

We did not have any direct costs, in fact we saved money as we took the decision to remove physical membership cards. The main in-kind cost has been staff time. This is hard to quantify but it has taken significant dedicated time from our Executive Director and Marketing and Audiences Manager.



Learning and reflections

What was very useful was doing this work alongside developing and launching our new vision for the organisation. It gave us a useful platform to test some of our ideas about membership with partners, trustees, staff and members; and it allowed us to change the language and articulation of the scheme in line with our new organisational vision.

As mentioned already I don't think we have managed to grow the governance aspect of the membership and in many ways this is down to the motivation of why someone becomes a member in the first place. Moving forward we want to explore ways of engaging members outside of the formality of an AGM context to gather thoughts and feedback from them in a more dynamic and immediate way.

During this time we also did the Big Give campaign and this definitely raised our profile as a charity and resulted in increased members and also new patrons.

Key Advice for others: One key learning is to not underestimate the time individual giving takes and the value of building personal relationships with donors. Another one is the importance of engagement of trustees and existing members in helping to advocate and spread the word about the membership and giving opportunities.

Next steps

We now need to work on the marketing of the membership scheme and awareness of it beyond our core audiences, and we need to embed membership options throughout our ticketing journey – both online and in person.

We also want to explore how we can grow the appetite for the governance aspect of the membership.

We would also like to introduce a young membership, that we plan on making free.

Future Arts Centres



Annabel Turpin and Gavin Barlow
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futureartscentres.org.uk



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