

Strategic Development of NW Dance

Consultants Brief, 2024/25 – A one year project

Project Summary

Cheshire Dance (CD) want to reimagine a robust and sustainable structure and development programme for Dance Consortia North West (DCNW), in consultation with ACE and our Partners, that can meet the wider North West Dance Sector's needs in the current landscape. This consultancy aims to support a 3 phase period of research, planning and resourcing that will enable us to

- Meaningfully engage with our Partners, made up of dance companies, venues, HE institutes, ACE and freelance artists to gather user research and feedback on working in the dance sector in the North West at this time.
- Engage new partners, key individual and organisations that can help meet the longer term objectives.
- Use this research to inform the creation of a newly imagined programme of work that speaks to the North West dance sector's needs.
- Create a development plan that includes a design for a robust and sustainable future for the strategic development of DCNW, a Governance structure fit-for-purpose and, in collaboration with an appointed fundraiser, Cheshire Dance and a series of Working Groups, support the development of Project Designs and submission of a range of applications to resource the plan.

Key Provocations

- What are our Partners' needs (particularly freelance artists) trying to work in the dance sector in the North West at this time and how can DCNW's programme of output best support them?
- How do we galvanise the existing cultural infrastructure (new and existing DCNW partners) to provide the resource needed to support a newly imagined programme of work?
- How do we access new funding and investment for DCNW's work, enabling local talent to flourish?

DCNW's Core Mission

The purpose of DCNW is to support the talent pipeline of dance artists, companies and their collaborators in making new work and new dance practice in the North West including near to where artists' live, with a particular focus on diversity and equity in the sector and places of strategic interest in the region by leveraging existing cultural infrastructure, resources and expertise across the partnership, the region and beyond.

DCNW's Progress to Date

Since 2018, Cheshire Dance has been leading Dance Consortia North West, a strategic partnership that seeks to address the central challenges and questions of dance sector development in the region. This is a long term project to which Cheshire Dance remains committed. Over the last 5 years DCNW has:-

- Brought most but not all the key players and organisations in the North West together.
- Advocated for the artistic, regenerative, educational and health merits of dance, raised the profile of dance and some of the region's artists. For some organisations, this has been about putting dance back of the agenda.
- Created a culture of collaboration, for relationship building and partnership development and with it a formal partnership agreement.
- Published a Dance Plan 2020-26 and in so doing, identified a shared language and priorities around strengthening the talent pipeline, increasing trade and acclaim for dance.
- Tested a number of commissioning approaches ranging from artist-led (mainstay of Research Programme) to partner-driven (2018/19 co-commissions), delivering outputs and outcomes for dance.
- Evidenced the potential to deliver in ways that no one organisation can do by itself.

- Learnt that providing sustained regular opportunities allows partners to build and shape their complimentary offers over time.

For more on DCNW achievements, please see the infographic on the last page and visit the [website](#).

Key Challenges Faced

The dance talent here in the North West is a naturally diverse pool which holds all the potential to deliver in a region that is amongst the most in need of Levelling Up. However, this talent is currently under-resourced and bottlenecked, lacking the infrastructure support needed to thrive. Diversity of access, ambition and ultimately quality is threatened by a lack of available and affordable development opportunities for talent.

Additionally, over the past 5 years we have witnessed the seismic impact of the fast-changing cultural, social and economic landscape is having on artists and partners. This is why a period of consultation and engagement feels crucial at this moment in time, in order to re-visit and update the Dance Plan and reimagine a strong and vibrant consortia that can drive diversity and equity in the North West dance sector. We want to see a dynamic and robust consortia model that sees strength in co-creative partnership working and is empowered to support the current and next generation of artists to thrive – both their productions and their practice in all contexts.

Additional Context

Arts Council England has supported DCNW through Managed Funds for the last 5 years, circa £50,000 per year. Additionally it has supported a 2 year Research Programme at £170,000 National Lottery Project Grant, now in its final stages. No other external funding has been secured in the last 4 years but at the same time the external funding market has not been tested fully.

Prior to this consultancy Cheshire Dance had employed a Partnerships Director fulltime on behalf of DCNW. This post was made redundant in Sept 2023. Separately Cheshire Dance will extend the current contract of its fundraiser who is already engaged in fundraising for Cheshire Dance core business, to support strategy development and project fundraising in parallel to this consultancy, to help secure external funds following the publication of the revised Dance Plan.

DCNW is currently unconstituted. It has its own bank account, an independent Chair and an Executive group made up of Partners that meets quarterly or more frequently as required.

Project Information

Long Term Objectives	Outcomes*	Project Activity	Project Outcomes
<p>A strengthened talent pipeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artistic and leadership development Homegrown talent development & retention. Creative partnership development Artist/career development and organisational development for artist-led companies. <p>A more diverse talent pipeline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address past under-representation amongst creatives identifying with Protected Characteristics, from low-income backgrounds or with culturally diverse aesthetics, inc. those in the non-subsidised dance sector. <p>New dance/arts development opportunity in Priority Places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Including LUFC, Priority Places, CPPs, Future High Streets. Support locally based artists, companies and creative entrepreneurs to join / lead place-based initiatives. Connect their outputs and practice beyond those places to the wider dance and cultural infrastructure across the region and country. <p>Partnership Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To extend partnership working and knowledge sharing across the sector(s) and define appropriate governance and staffing structure to deliver. Leadership for the sector by the sector. 	<p>M, Q, R</p> <p>Q, R</p> <p>K</p> <p>N</p>	<p>Preparation – Months 1 to 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tender and select a consultant, induct/prepare for consultation. <p>Phase 1 - Consultation – Months 3 to 6</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research and gather stakeholder and wider sector needs in relation to the stated objectives. Consultation with artists, existing partners and potential new partners, particularly in relation to diversity and place. Review of existing plans, previous consultation, previous DCNW work. Independent research, use of analysis tools and accessing relevant data / information via ACE and other providers. [Note: Feed learning from current NLPG Research Programme into the consultation] <p>Phase 2 - Publish an Evidence-led Plan – Months 6 to 9</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify short and long-term priorities that aim to meet the needs of the NW Dance sector. Identify relevant business models that secure partner buy-in Outline projects that best address identified priorities, each with I&E budget, income scoping, cases for support, named partners (inc. new partners) with organised delivery/working group and identified existing assets, resources and expertise to be contributed in cash/in-kind. Review existing and comparative Governance and democratic foundations and develop options for review. <p>Phase 3 - Resource the Plan – Months 8 to 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Target and diversify income with partnership applications facilitated and supported by the consultant and fundraiser. Recommend a fit-for-purpose Governance and Staffing structure to best deliver the longer-term objectives. 	<p>A re-stated set of long-term objectives in the context of Let's Create and other relevant policy/manifesto agendas.</p> <p>A repository of evidence and testimony, consultation findings and analysed data with clear learning outcomes, prioritised for action.</p> <p>A revised Dance Plan containing :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A strategic framework with partner buy-in. Defined cases for support and programme/project designs that deliver on the learning and priorities. Full delivery plan for each programme Full income source scoping for each programme <p>Series of programme working groups formed with clear leadership and roles.</p> <p>A suite of applications submitted for each programme of work.</p> <p>A renewed partnership, including with new partners joined.</p> <p>A Governance and staffing structure fit for purpose.</p>

Consultant's Brief

Fee

Cheshire Dance seeks expressions of interest based on a consultant's budget of £22,250 inclusive of travel, expenses and any other research costs – and inclusive of VAT.

Number of working days this will cover to be mutually agreed between the consultant(s) and the Co-Chairs of CD and Chair of DCNW.

A payment schedule shall be mutually agreed prior to signing a contract and shall be tied to delivery of key outputs, included in the brief below.

The Brief including Key Dates

We are looking for a consultant who will deliver through 3 phases: **research, planning and resourcing**, providing fortnightly updates to the end of the project. The task will include:-

Consultation and Research

- Adopting a 'user-led research' approach based on partner and artist needs and priorities, with a range of formats for gathering data and insights from across the sector, along with full transparency as to how their input will inform future plans for DCNW.
- Integrating Arts Council England strategic insight and Let's Create context with the realities of the sector to create shared understanding on the most effective way to deliver the project's long term objectives.

Consultation and Research Outputs

The Consultation and Research period will conclude with the publication of a Recommendations Report by **[to be agreed with consultant]** that includes evidence of :-

- Stakeholder and wider sector needs in relation to the stated objectives.
- Consultation with artists, existing DCNW partners and potential new partners, particularly in relation to diversity and place.
- A review of previous DCNW work, publications.
- Your independent desk research, relevant data/information via ACE and other sources.

Planning

- In collaboration with Cheshire Dance and Partners, revise the Dance Plan by building on the evidence of the consultation findings and research gathered.
- Support a series of project working groups to emerge with clear leadership and roles that will create, resource and deliver evidence-based project designs.

Planning Outputs

A revised Dance Plan with summary project proposals should be submitted by **[to be agreed with consultant]**, that includes:-

- Long term objectives and a strategic framework for them to be met including partner buy-in
- Laying out the evidence from the Research to identify both short and long-term priorities.
- Identify relevant business models (particularly financial) that can drive partnership working.
- Summaries of the Terms of Reference and Project Designs/Plans being worked up by the Partner Working Groups
- A fundraising strategy (developed by the fundraiser)
- A Governance Options Report as part of the Dance Plan – inc. a review of DCNW Governance and membership, inclusion of new partners and reference to other governance examples.

A series of project working groups become fully functional and each publish a Project Plan, with :-

- Terms of Reference
- Lead Project Partner identified as well as fundholder.
- Detailed cases for support and prospect lists
- Project delivery model / partnership
- Agreed I&E budgets with identified existing assets, resources and expertise that will be contributed in kind alongside partners' cash contributions.

Resourcing

- Working with a fundraiser, the leading Project Partners and Cheshire Dance, develop draft applications for comment and submit final applications for each project.
- Progress and conclude debate on the 'fit-for-purpose' Governance and staffing structure that can best and feasibly deliver the long-term objectives through strategic collaboration and optimal potential resourcing.

Resourcing Outputs

Consultation with Cheshire Dance, the Partners and an appointed fundraising consultant will be ongoing until [to be agreed with consultant] and result in :-

- A suite of applications submitted (fundraising targets to be determined/agreed as part of strategy)
- A recommended Governance and Staffing structure

Availability of support during the consultancy process

- Primary contact - Director of Cheshire Dance, adam@cheshiredance.org
- Regularly report to Co-Chair of Cheshire Dance and Chair of DCNW
- Update a project steering group, made up of DCNW partners, at key milestone moments during the research process, to be mutually agreed.
- Some Comms and Admin support via the Cheshire Dance team. Support will be prioritised as part of wider DCNW activities.
- A separate budget of £3,500 to host consultation workshops (including artist bursaries) involving all potential stakeholders of DCNW
- A separate contract will be issued to a freelance fundraiser, an existing associate of Cheshire Dance. The fundraiser will work in parallel with you, to develop a fundraising strategy as part of the consultation/planning phases. Then also in parallel, go on to secure longer term funding for core and identified projects during the resourcing phase. Their work will include:-
 - Conducting a Fundraising Situational and Market Analysis. Include initial findings as part of the Recommendations Report.
 - Publish a Fundraising Strategy as part of the Dance Plan, identifying a sustainable fundraising model for DCNW for both core costs and project specific funding that is not solely reliant on ACE funding.
 - Scope for funding sources that hold potential to meet DCNW priorities and diversify income streams.
 - Collaborate with Cheshire Dance, DCNW and leading partners to build bespoke cases for support tailored to individual funds related to activity DCNW wants to deliver, directly informed by the needs and priorities articulated by partners and artists during the consultation and planning phases.
 - Submit the strongest possible applications to support delivery of DCNW's long-term objectives.
 - Contribute to the Governance and staffing review in order to optimise the potential to secure contributed income and achieve the long-term objectives of DCNW.

Useful contextual reading

- Infographic outlining DCNW's achievements 2018-2023, included below
- www.danceconsortianorthwest.org
- Dance Plan (published in 2021), attached
- Arts Council England [Let's Create outcomes / and investment principles](#)
- [Priority Places and Levelling Up for Culture Places | Arts Council England](#)

Project Budget

Consultant	Consultation/Research, Planning and Resourcing phases Inclusive of all costs, travel, expenses etc	£22,250
Fundraiser	Separate contract	Via Cheshire Dance
Comms and Admin Support	1 day per week equivalent	Via Cheshire Dance
Sector Consultation Workshops		£3,500
Reporting / Accountability	Cheshire Dance – Consultant induction and knowledge sharing throughout.	Via Cheshire Dance
Steering group	DCNW Partners (x6)	Via DCNW

How to Apply

Deadline:

Thurs 11th April 2024, midnight

Send to:

Adam Holloway, adam@cheshiredance.org.

Also available for an informal chat prior to submitting a proposal.

Please submit a proposal outlining:

Your (and your team's) profile(s).

An outline of your proposed approach to this consultancy project.

Breakdown of budget, days/rates and key milestones.

Document:

No more than 4 sides of A4 and separately, examples of similar work undertaken.

Interview:

Applicants shortlisted will be invited for an interview with Cheshire Dance Co-Chairs and Director, DCNW Chair and a Director of another of it's Partner organisations as well as an Arts Council England representative. This interview will seek to open up discussion about your submitted proposal and will take place on **16th May 2024**, in-person (Winsford).

DANCE CONSORTIA NORTH WEST 2018 - 2023

ACHIEVEMENTS

Membership

Signed Partnership Agreement

- 30 Active Members inc. 12 NPOs, 7 HEIs & 14 Venues
- 9 left/ceased but 7 joined post-pandemic
- Joining processes for new members in place



Active members cover an increasing breadth and diversity of the sector and artistic practice.

Established Working Groups and Independent Decision-Making Panel for the Research Programme.

Members are forward looking, seeking solutions to challenges & opportunities for growth.

“ It is essential to work together to increase the quality, diversity and volume of work made in the region - no single organisation can do this alone. There are now many connections with other organisations in the region that did not exist before. ”



Programme & Strategy



- Successful testing of both artist-led & partner-led commissioning
- 2 partner-led co-commissions - still touring/active
- 17 Research Programme commissions
- 13 Mentor/Mentees Relationships
- Regular, active participation in national networks and initiatives
- Research Programme online repository.
- Findings and Recommendations Report - Published April 2020
- North West Dance Plan - Published July 2021

“ DCNW is unique. It is the only strategic initiative concerned with the development of the dance sector as a whole, across the entire region - connecting artists and existing infrastructure. No other individual organisation has anything like this outlook, reach and mission. ”

Research Programme

- 3 commissioning rounds over 2 years
- 63 proposal submissions (27% success rate)
- 17 successful projects commissioned
- 88% of recipients were independent artists/micro-companies*

OUTPUTS TO DATE

- 60% of projects targeting priority audiences
- 10 Dance labs and 8 platform events
- 55 Related commissions & performances
- 97 Artists working within the programme
- 22 New products / commissions
- 514 Total days of artist employment
- 18 Performance or Exhibition Days
- 23 Sessions for Education, Training or Participation.

i * The Research Programme has prioritised investment reaching the independent sector.

“ The Research Programme has been critical oxygen for an artistic community that is largely left to its own devices. Regular annual programmes like this would enable organisations to build their support over time. ”

Evaluation due Spring 2024.

Communications



- Established brand and identity
- 21K overall website event hits, over 2.2K sessions, 1.4K users
- 298 news items published on website (open calls, jobs, opportunities, sector news)
- 25 Mailer bulletins reaching 7.4K recipients with an average open rate of 41.6%
- 92K reach to date over 3 social media platforms.



“ Campaigns really help us to shift the sector forward; the concerted partnership push is invaluable to reach greater audiences. ”

Collaborative Campaigns

- 5 International Dance Day campaigns with 20K reach per campaign amongst all partners
- 4 'New Dance Season' campaigns averaging 3.5K-6K reach on DCNW platforms alone
- An Education & Participation Campaign with engagement from 55 artists & organisations.

Cheshire Dance Hosting

- Celebrating 5 years of investment in dance in NW via ACE for DCNW
- Low cost hosting model of a major strategic initiative with much in-kind support
- Signed hosting agreement in place
- Enabled succession of 4 lead officers for a project initiative over 6 years
- Successful mitigation of cashflow challenges to keep DCNW operating
- Extensive induction-type dialogue with Cheshire Dance staff about dance in NW, sharing of knowledge, resources, policies, templates etc.
- An ongoing commitment from Cheshire Dance to build upon strengths and achievements of DCNW.

“ DCNW has built an ecology that is collaborative, nurturing and primed for further development. ”

Cheshire Dance is a respected lead host organisation for DCNW amongst organisations and artists. ”

Dance Consortia North West