

Strategy | **The Cultural Offer in Slough**
2010 – 2015 **Supporting Culture in Slough**
Executive Summary

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1. Our vision

Cultural services bring people together, celebrating the diversity and richness of Slough's community, raising people's aspirations, creating opportunities and nurturing skills and creativity. Cultural Services will be a force for change, making Slough an exciting and vibrant place to work and live.

This strategy sets out how we aim to deliver our vision. We have developed it by talking with, listening to and challenging local people to see what they need to overcome barriers and meet their aspirations. This is how we will shape our service to meet local needs, and why it will evolve over the coming years to meet changing needs

2. Our values

Our vision is underpinned by the following core values:

Reflecting Slough's community and responding to local needs

The community in Slough is at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to shape our service to meet their changing needs.

Quality

We provide excellent customer service and high quality community arts services, challenging ourselves continuously to meet customer expectations. We model excellence in everything we do to provide the best quality service we can.

Diversity

We value and celebrate Slough's diversity, striving for arts in Slough that reflect the diversity of the town.

Access

We deliver a relevant and accessible service to people living and working in Slough.

Partnership working

We work collaboratively with partners, both internal and external on a local, regional and national basis. Maximising resources to meet community needs.

Monitoring and evaluation

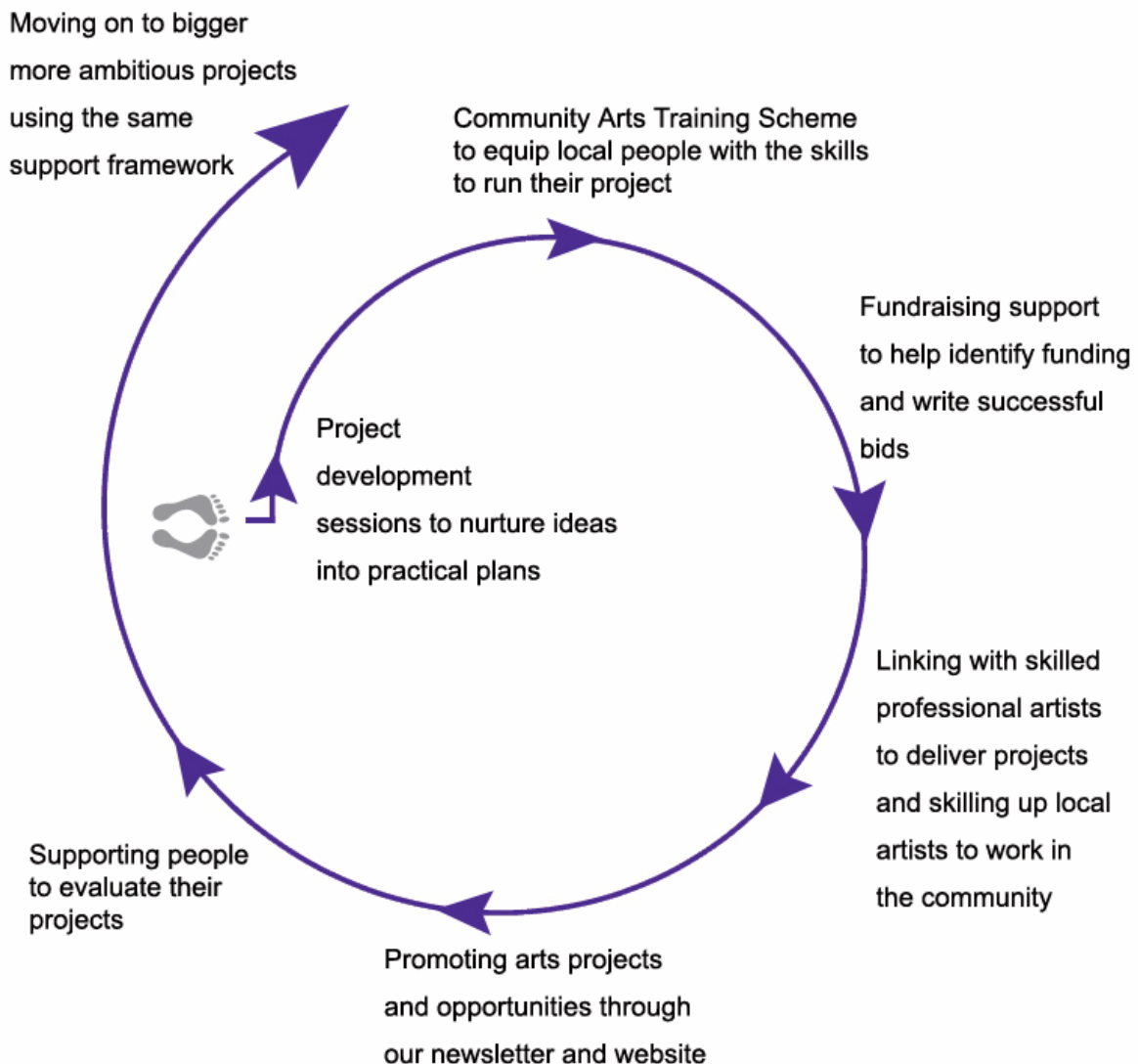
We continue to challenge and evaluate our services to move forward and meet the needs of users and to monitor the impact of our work. We continue to develop best practice and set new standards.

3. Our role

In Slough, community arts are developed by local people for their communities. Our ethos is that our local communities are the experts when it comes to knowing what local residents want for the arts, that they are best placed to deliver many arts activities.

Our role is not to impose our view of what the arts should be but to work with the community to facilitate their ideas. We work with individuals or groups to grow the seed of an idea into a successful arts project, providing support at key stages of project development. We provide support based on what our users need and have developed key services in response. We have a strategic function not a delivery role, and with this approach the support that we provide reaches many more people in Slough than direct provision would.

This diagram illustrates the process that we have developed to engage and support the community.



4. Why the arts matter in Slough

The arts have a very real impact on improving all areas of people's lives, and contribute to Slough's Sustainable Community Strategy.

Community Cohesion

The arts in Slough....

- encourage social inclusion, forging links between communities, tackling extremism and preventing isolation.
- help people share cultures and experiences, learn about each other and celebrate the things that make us human.
- bring people together in a way that fosters dialogue, creates understanding, overcomes prejudice and enables people to connect and build foundations for stronger community cohesion.

Health and Wellbeing

The arts in Slough....

- have dramatic and measurable positive effects on both physical and mental health and wellbeing as part of treatment and to complement care.
- bring compassion, understanding and expression and can help people communicate their feelings and conditions when words fail.
- create a sense of self-esteem and a positive desire for life, increasing physical and mental activity and communicating information about healthier lifestyles and attitudes in a way that feels natural and that people can relate to.

Economy and skills

The arts in Slough....

- build a strong creative sector and through it create a more skilled workforce, new opportunities for employment and a more attractive environment for business investment.
- develop essential skills, creative thinking and problem solving and strengthen people's ability to be creative, innovative and forward thinking.
- help to ensure the creative industries remain a robust and fast growing element of the local economy through nurturing talent.

Environment

The arts in Slough....

- improve the local environment; engage local people in taking ownership and nurture pride in Slough.
- celebrate what is distinctive about Slough, helping shape local identity and change the way people think about where they live.

- provide positive messages and information about the environment and the means to shape ideas through engaging local people in creating a sustainable, greener future.

Community Safety

The arts in Slough....

- help reduce crime and the fear of crime, tackling the root causes of crime and anti-social behaviour, engaging people who are disengaged and bringing together those who may be in conflict by developing understanding.
- tackle individual issues at a local level and address issues in particular community settings.
- create a more welcoming physical environment, encouraging people to take part in shaping an area, change perceptions and engender local pride and ownership.

5. Opportunities

Key opportunities we have noted are:

Diverse communities

- The cultural diversity of the community provides a richness and diversity of art forms.
- The arts are embedded in expressions of culture with strong cultural identity which leads to active participation in the arts in the town.
- Communities are proud of their heritage and actively work to share their culture through the arts.

Even greater audiences

- Slough supports very successful community arts events and practitioners who are able to reach all of their desired audience through word of mouth.
- There are opportunities for increasing marketing to develop wider audiences, to increase participation in the arts and to help social cohesion by encouraging local people to experience arts activities from outside their own community.

Council priorities

- A strong and well-supported community arts scene in Slough provides significant opportunities to deliver council priorities and offer delivery of outcomes through the arts as a resource to council officers.
- The arts have a real opportunity in Slough to show tangible and measurable benefits and how they contribute to improving lives of people in Slough. The opportunity for the arts lies in finding robust methods to capture and demonstrate this.

The Learning Curve

The Learning Curve proposed as part of the Heart of Slough, will be a new library with 180 seat performance space, workshop rooms and an exhibition area and presents the following opportunities:

- A town centre focus for the arts.
- A venue where arts groups can meet and run arts activities, exhibit and experience visual arts, perform or attend performances.
- Links between the arts and other services to increase participation in the arts through engaging other service users such as those who use the library and life long learning.

6. Priorities

The priorities listed below link directly to our vision:

1. **Participation and access:** Extending opportunities for people to take part in a range of arts activities and art forms that reflect the diverse communities in Slough and remove barriers to participation.
2. **Infrastructure for the arts in Slough:** Working with partners across Slough to ensure provision of venues and facilities for people to showcase, exhibit, perform and attend arts events and activities.
3. **Continuity and sustainability:** Supporting the growth and sustainability of the arts community in Slough through fundraising, developing home grown talent, and equipping Slough's arts community with the skills needed to thrive.
4. **Raising people's aspirations:** Working with individuals and groups to develop opportunities for them to be inspired through the arts, to express themselves in creative and meaningful ways. To support professional artists to work in partnership with community groups to develop arts projects that inspire and excite.
5. **Integration:** Weaving the arts into the fabric of Slough ensuring that it is at the heart of agendas, advocating for the use of arts to address non-arts agendas and taking stock of the impact of the arts.

Focus for our work

In developing a focus for our work over the next three years, we have taken into account our vision, values and aims as well as the resources and opportunities for the arts in Slough.

We will focus on:

a) Community development

- We will focus on working directly with the community, to facilitate their delivery of the arts by providing training, project development sessions to shape projects, fundraising support and promotion of arts opportunities, in doing this we will take into account what our partners are providing,
- Integrating culture and arts delivery into the council's approaches

b) Advocacy for the arts

- Measure and disseminate the impact of the arts to advocate how the arts add value, contribute to the lives of people in Slough and to council priorities.
- Advocate for the arts through our approach, working to develop arts owned by the local community.

c) Strategic approach to audience development and marketing

- Make visible the arts offer in Slough to raise its profile and increase engagement, through mapping and promotion.
- To provide a context to bring people together who are working in the arts.

7. Implementing the strategy

There is a large network of people, partners, organisations and stakeholders in Slough who make the arts happen. The Community Arts team will lead on implementing the strategy, with the input from partners and stakeholders key to its success. We realise that we can't be everything to everybody, which is why strong partnerships are so important to the delivery of our work and why we will focus on areas of greatest need'

We will develop a group of Arts Champions who will provide a forum to share ideas, shape strategic approaches and deliver solutions. The arts champions will provide a forum to ensure that the arts are reaching communities in Slough, and will be representative of different communities as well as art forms. It is anticipated that as well as informing our work, that the Arts Champions will also work together to meet agreed priorities.

When planning our programme of work to address our priorities, we will be realistic and pragmatic about our capacity to deliver services to meet community needs. Our action plan identifies services, projects and activities that we will deliver.

It will also be important to identify and secure external investment to ensure the delivery of some of the projects and activities.

8. Contact

Comments or feedback on this strategy can be made through artsinfo@slough.gov.uk