



Cyngor Celfyddydau Cymru
Arts Council of Wales

A Simple 10 Step Guide to Writing Your Marketing and Communications Plan



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Introduction

Arts Council of Wales is responsible for supporting high quality and exciting new arts projects that reaches wide audiences and has a clear impact on the public in Wales. Because of our status as a lottery good causes distributor, we need to ensure that the projects we support have a marketing plan that demonstrates how audiences will be able to enjoy the projects that we fund.

If you are applying for funding to create a new body of work, a tour or an opportunity to present your work at a recognised public venue, then it is important that you consider your current and potential new audience as well as the quality of your work.

If you have never applied for a grant before then the whole process of marketing a project may be new to you. This document is aimed at making the whole process easier – for example, by prompting you to consider the type of people that might come to your event and the ways in which you will let them know about your event.

Perhaps you have already applied for a grant and were successful in attracting audiences. However, our [Arts Strategy](#) is underpinned by the concept of 'Make, Reach, Sustain' which prioritises the audiences who will be able to benefit from the many projects that we fund, and this document will help you think about marketing your project in ways to engage with your audiences.

When thinking about marketing your project, you will need to consider the different audience groups in Wales, for example Welsh speakers who may prefer to receive information in their first language, people with disabilities who may not use traditional marketing materials, or people who may not use online or social networks as frequently as other groups.

Depending on your target audience, you will need to tailor the way you reach each of your audiences.

It is important that you consider your current and potential new audience as well as the quality of your work



Dinefwr Literature Festival (image: Luned Aaron and Literature Wales)

The benefits of having a marketing plan

Writing a marketing plan might seem like a daunting task but this simple, jargon-free guide will get you started and help you promote your work and grow your audiences.

Developing a plan will give you the confidence to try out different approaches and help you build up a faithful audience that will return to see your work again.

We expect artists and organisations to work in partnership with each other. If you work in partnership you may be able to get your production or project promoted more widely if your partner organisation has a marketing team, and a database of customers.

What to do first

Where are you now?

Do a quick round up of what you know about your current audiences, the type of marketing activity you've used in the past and what worked well (and what didn't).

Think about:

- Your work and how people can enjoy it – for example, do they have to visit a particular venue?
- Your audience. Who are they, how many of them are there, where they come from, what types of people are they?
- Your budget. Look at your costs, and work out what proportion of your budget is spent on each element of activity. How much are you willing to spend on your marketing?
- Location and access. Where will your project be based and is there good physical access for disabled audiences?
- Competition. Is there anything else on around the same time – not necessarily arts-related? Is it a busy time of year?
- Current activity. What marketing activity do you currently undertake and how successful is it?

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Speak with your creative partner or host organisation to see if they know of anything going on in the area.



Do a SWOT analysis

Once you have looked at the above issues, then you will be clearer of the bigger picture and this can help inform your marketing activity. A SWOT will help you do this. SWOT stands for **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats. You can use a SWOT to look at different aspects of what you do but here just concentrate on your marketing activity and things that relate to your audience. Here are some tips to make your SWOT work hard for you.

- Think about how you will maintain your strengths, minimise the impact of weaknesses and threats, and seize opportunities which will help you achieve your objectives.
- Remember to think about what other people think about you, as well as your own perceptions. For instance, you might think your tweets are good but what do your followers think?
- You may have little or no control over external factors but identifying them enables you to work towards making the most of opportunities and reducing the impact of threats.

Here's an example of a simple SWOT for an organisation that's preparing a marketing plan:



New arts collective organising a Christmas craft fair

Strengths

- New and exciting work, not seen before
- Work of many recent graduate – so high quality but affordable
- Strong database which includes many contacts
- Members of the craft collective are Welsh speakers so can communicate bilingually

Weaknesses

- First time the group has held a large scale event so no-one knows about the collective and its background
- Clashes with another craft fair
- Funding is limited so a very basic website rather than e-commerce function

Opportunities

- Venue is in an area where lots of families and young professionals live - an affluent audience on the doorstep
- Plenty of advertising/promotional opportunities and the collective has links with illustrators and web designers for digital marketing skills

Threats

- Other craft fairs taking place throughout the festive period – people may get tired of the same thing
- Christmas lights are being turned on in the town centre on the same date so people may go there instead

Here's an example of a simple SWOT for an individual that's preparing a marketing plan:

An individual's theatre production supported by local arts centre

Strengths

- Writer collaborating with an artistic director that has good reputation –both have loyal following from theatre networks
- Low priced tickets
- An interactive, digital and social media platform to engage with audiences before and during the production

Weaknesses

- Piece has not been trialled or tested and has no reviews or comments to support it
- Many different social media outlets used but no consistency in use

Opportunities

- Good partnership and marketing support from arts centre staff
- Recent news item relates to the subject of the piece
- Young audiences big consumers of digital and social media
- Project ties in with Arts Council of Wales' priorities for young people

Threats

- Population has less disposable income
- Ongoing road works in area of performance
- Young audiences more interested in games and television box sets

Laying everything out like this should help you make the most of the advantages that you have, while being aware of the potential opportunities.

The SWOT will make you think how to make a splash with your new production. Perhaps you will make sure that your host organisation/creative partner will be promoting the show on your behalf. Perhaps you will come up with a vivid marketing design that will catch people's eye. Our standard condition of grant will ensure that you translate the information so that Welsh speakers will be able to read about you project in their chosen language.

We've included a blank template for you to complete. [Click here](#)



Set SMART objectives

Setting objectives helps us focus, gets people on the same page, helps us define what finished looks like and allows us to evaluate project outcomes. Your objectives need to be SMART:

- **Specific:** they need to describe a specific outcome linked to a rate, number, percentage or frequency
- **Measurable:** include a rate, number, percentage or frequency
- **Actionable and Agreed:** possible to achieve given existing resources and that everyone shares
- **Realistic:** you have the skills, knowledge and authority to deliver
- **Time-based:** they include a defined finish and/or start date

Here's an example of turning a vague objective into something that is more precise and will really help you.



We've included a blank template for you to complete. [Click here](#)



Not-so-SMART objective	Increase the number of young people attending our project
Key questions	Objective
Specific – what is the specific task?	Double the number of 14 – 18 year olds attending our project to 1000 (from 500)
Measurable – how will you tell when you've arrived at your target?	Collect attendance data. Different price band for this group to ease collection of data. Monitor monthly. Exit research for non-ticketed events
Achievable – is it possible to complete your target given your resources? Does everyone agree?	Dedicate 10% of marketing budget to this objective. Agree with team. Plan time to monitor and develop exit research.
Realistic – are you sure that you're not being over-ambitious?	Have identified potential for growth is high. Need to collaborate with schools and venues.
Time-based – what are the start and end dates?	January 1st to December 31 2016
SMART objective	To double the number of 14 – 18 year olds attending our events in 2016 to 1000 (compared to 500 in 2015).

Select key audiences to target

To make your limited resources stretch as far as possible, break your potential audience into manageable chunks so that you can communicate with each group in the most appropriate and effective way. This is called segmentation. To check if a potential segment is the best one for your project ask yourself these questions – Is it:

- measurable – can you count how big it is?
- accessible – is it straightforward to get your message to them?
- substantial – is it big enough to bother with?
- unique – is it different from any other segment?
- appropriate – is this type of audience likely to be interested in your project?
- stable – is it unlikely to change in the short term so you'll be able to build a relationship with them?

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Communicate
with each group
in the most
appropriate
and effective
way.



European Prospects, Ffotogallery (image: Andreas Langen)

Agree features and benefits

Now you need to describe your project in a way that will interest your chosen segments and that relates to what they want to get from an arts experience. Try to look at things from your customer's point of view and spell out what they might find most interesting.

The difference between a feature and a benefit is often that a feature is what you want to say and a benefit is what the customer wants to hear. Knowledge of your work is vital but any fact that isn't adding to your selling message is detracting from it.

Remember the WIIFM factor. People want to know 'What's in it for me?' – in other words, "why should I attend your exhibition/show?"

One of the easiest ways to turn a feature into a benefit is to ask, 'so what?'

So a feature might be that you have a Saturday matinee. So what? It's a great and different way to keep the children entertained on a dull, Saturday afternoon.

Here are some more examples of turning features into benefits:



Feature – a description of what it is and what it does	Benefit – looked at from the customer's point of view. So what?
Being a participant in a carnival	A chance to learn new skills and have fun with a new group of friends
A new music performance	A way of escaping from your usual routine and a chance to try something different
An exhibition of ceramics	Delight in a beautifully crafted object
Post-show talk	You can find out more and get closer to the creator of the work
An innovative performance of a well known classic	Think about things in different ways, be intrigued and stimulated

Remember the needs of your audience, in other words, what do they want?

By trying to understand why people behave as they do, you may be able to identify the important needs your communications plan should address. Ask yourself these questions:

- What are they after - new experiences, an enjoyable night-out, something to do with all the family, a chance to learn or join in?
- What will they do next - are they ready to engage more deeply with you, see your work again, become a friend or supporter.
- What motivates them - what do your audiences or potential audiences like about the arts? What do they expect? This will enable us to give a far more focused message.
- What are their priorities - how much do your audiences know about the arts and is it a high priority for them? Where does what you offer fit into their leisure time?
- What do they think of you - what do they like about what you do and do they believe that you do it the best? What don't they like?
- Pay specific attention to the needs of hard-to-reach audiences including disadvantaged groups, Black and minority ethnic groups, and disabled people.
- Remember that Wales is a bilingual nation and marketing to your audience in the language of their choice can offer many benefits. Publishing core information relating to your activity bilingually and with equal prominence is also a standard condition of all Arts Council of Wales grants. Planning your marketing activity to be in both Welsh and English from the outset, rather than as an afterthought, will save you time and money in the long term.

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Hys Bys is a welsh language marketing term used to create a buzz around your event. It is a shorthand way of referring to promoting events and exhibitions, often via the press, media and online. This is very effective for promoting arts events.

Helpful guidelines to bilingual design are available on the website of the [Welsh Language Commissioner](#)



Literature Wales

Develop a successful strategy

The Marketing Mix is the combination of four key tools that make up a marketing plan. If any one of these is wrong, your marketing programme is likely to fail. Use it like a checklist to make sure you've considered all the things that are important to your customer.

These tools are often known as the 4 Ps: Product, Price, Place, Promotion. For campaigns that include digital and social elements, it can be useful to also think about the 3 Cs: Conversation, Customisation, Community.

Here are some key things to think about:

Product – i.e. your project (show/exhibition/festival/workshop)

- Everything about it – things that make it unique, when it's on, brand, benefits, features, time, what it's all about
- The atmosphere in your venue if you have one or where you promote or present your work
- The way you relate to the audience
- The facilities you have
- Merchandise

Price

- Does your pricing meet the needs of your audience(s)?
Can you charge less to those where price is a genuine barrier and more to those who are happy to pay?
- Price changes perceptions of value – something expensive can be seen as a exclusive and desirable, something cheap can be seen as unprofessional or shoddy
- How much income do you need to make to meet your objectives?
- Would you be more successful if you changed your pricing for different target audiences?



Does your pricing
meet the needs
of your
audience? 

Place

- Traditionally 'place' in the marketing mix is about where your project takes place. Are there a lot of outlets for your work or just a few?
- It can include ticketing including internet and mobile sales
- In the arts we often widen the definition to look at issues of accessibility and reducing barriers to attendance. Could any of your events be more successful in a different space?
- Are the events available at the right time for the target audiences?

Promotion

- Are you translating core information in your marketing materials? This is a standard condition of grant in Arts Council Wales funded projects.
- What would happen if you used different ways to communicate with people? So instead of using a piece of print for instance think about other ways you can reach your audience that might be more appropriate and more successful
- There are a wide range of digital and traditional methods you can use

Are you saying
the right things,
to the right
people, in the
right way?



WOMEX Showcase (image: Yannis Psathas)

Conversation

Nurture a sustained and engaged group of people by sparking conversations and adding value by sharing exclusive information, stories, asking questions and creating opportunities to engage and connect. You need to engage your audience if you want to hold on to them.

Are you:

- Sharing behind-the-scenes information
- Developing stories
- Listening to what your audiences are saying
- Creating opportunities to engage and react

Customisation (responding to your audience)

Audiences' expectations of control and choice have risen and they respond to being part of the process. Digital and social media allows us to give more choice and control to our audiences from when and how they receive our communications, for instance through our website, by email, by text, to which language they want to receive it in.

- Are you providing tailored communications?

Community (engaging with your audience)

We're all social creatures who like to form groups and communities to enhance what we do. Build communities of interest around your website and social media platforms. Your community will only be as good as the amount of time and effort you put into it so you need to listen, facilitate and be actively involved. Always give your community something to think about. Ask their opinion and use their knowledge to help your marketing efforts.

Are you:

- Asking for opinions
- Using your audiences' knowledge to add value
- For example, if you run workshops as part of your participatory programme do you have a platform for your members to engage in – perhaps involving some of your artists or volunteers as well?

Are you giving your audiences choice and control when it comes to receiving information? 

Are you being actively involved in building communities? 

Choose the Right Tools

There are a wide range of on and off-line tools available to promote your arts activities. The important thing is not to jump straight in at this stage - going through this planning process will allow you to choose the right tools, make sure that you stand the best chance of meeting your objectives and puts the audience at the centre of your plan.

Here are some examples of some marketing and social media tools that will allow you to communicate with different groups of audiences in different ways:

- Facebook
- Wordpress
- Mail Chimp
- Twitter
- Tumblr
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Traditional print mediums –
e.g. posters, leaflets, press releases, adverts, listings.



Plan your action

Now it's time to make an action plan outlining what to do when. Think through all the tasks involved in delivering your campaign including who will be responsible for delivering each part, how long each task will take and what problems you might encounter along the way.



Take a look at our [marketing campaign template](#). to help you plan the whole process of marketing your event. [Click here](#)



Monitoring and evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is a key part of any event, project or promotional campaign. It is also a key part of an Arts Council Wales project grant, whereby Arts Council Wales expects to know the impact of your activities and the audience figures it creates.

As well as helping you assess how successful your project is, and if your marketing plan is effective, it will also help you with your completion report and help you see what worked and what didn't for future reference.

You shouldn't wait until it's over – you should be able to monitor your progress and achievement against your project's aims and objectives at key moments throughout its duration. Your communications plan is a 'living document' – don't be afraid to change course if things aren't working.

Think about the evidence you need to collect as you go along – such as visitor numbers, tickets sold, income earned – to help you evaluate the impact of your project including gathering feedback from audiences, participants and partner organisations.

So monitoring is about collecting information about what is happening, while it's happening and evaluation is putting a value on what you finally achieved.

To evaluate your project you need to assess:

- If you met your objectives
- Was the project worth doing?
- Did you do it well?
- Did you achieve anything else along the way?
- Were your resources (money, time, people, spaces) used well?
- What else do you need to do?



What have you learnt and how can you apply that to improve future campaigns?



Putting it all together and making it work

Now you've read the 10 steps go through it again, step by step, but this time start filling in the marketing campaign plan template. If you get stuck, say because you don't have the data you need, don't be afraid to make a guestimate. A guess based on your experience will always be better than nothing at all. You can also ring the Arts Council Wales information team 0845 8734 900 – we're happy to point you in the right direction or book a place to one of our regular funding advice sessions.

Good luck and happy marketing.



Open House, NoFit State (image: Andrew Billington)



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www.artscouncilofwales.org.uk