

THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT BOARD RESPONSE TO THE EVALUATION REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF A PASSION FOR EXCELLENCE – THE CULTURE AND SPORT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY

PUBLISHED JUNE 2010

Forward

'A Passion for Excellence', the improvement strategy for culture and sport, was launched in March 2008 and offers local authorities a menu of support to help them improve the outcomes from their cultural and sporting services. Two years on, the strategy and its associated programme of support have been independently evaluated. The evaluation shows valuable progress on the improvement journey and illustrates the compelling contribution that culture and sport can play in improving local outcomes. We are pleased to see evidence of the positive momentum and influence of the improvement programme, but also realise the challenges facing local authorities in the current climate. In the past two years we have responded flexibly to the changing needs of local authorities and look forward to further engagement with them to make sure that the improvement strategy continues to meet their needs and supports them in harnessing culture and sport to make a difference to their communities.

Introduction

DCMS commissioned ERS Research and Consultancy to evaluate the impact of the culture and sport improvement strategy. The report published in January 2010 concludes that real progress has been made although it varies across areas and different services. Over two thirds of respondents felt that the strategy was valuable in influencing improved practice in their area and it has been a useful prompt to address performance issues. There are generally high levels of use and satisfaction with the tools and support provided through the culture and sport improvement project. Given that the project supporting the current improvement strategy began in April 2008, it is still relatively early to assess the true impact of the strategy and more time is required to embed improvement activity, particularly in light of recent changes in NDPBs.

Their evaluation identified clear areas for further improvement including better communication, improved local leadership and greater visibility and consistency of NDPBs at the local level. This paper sets out the partnership's response to each of the recommendations made by ERS, and links this to the work programme to be taken forward during 2010-11.

Background

Between 2005 - 2007 DCMS and NDPB partners provided £250,000 a year to IDeA to run the Cultural Services Improvement Unit to help the culture sector improve services provided through local government. This work was built on in 2008, when DCMS together with Arts Council England (ACE), Culture & Leisure Officers Association (CLOA), English Heritage (EH), Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA), Government Office Network (GO), Local Government Association (LGA), Museums Libraries and Archives Council (MLA), and Sport England (SE), published 'A Passion for Excellence – an improvement strategy for culture and sport'. A Project Management Board (PMB) was established to oversee and drive the strategy (see list of board members at Annex A).

The culture and sport improvement strategy aims to support local government to deliver better outcomes, improve the quality of life locally and improve the delivery of the cultural and sport services for local people. It set out a framework to:

- improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of culture and sport in the delivery of economic, social and environmental outcomes in local communities.

- improve the performance of the culture and sport sector and to address under performance
- build capacity and leadership
- simplify and co-ordinate the improvement architecture

IDeA is leading a three year programme of work to raise awareness of the strategy, build capacity and tools to support sector led improvement, capture evidence of impact and share learning. This is supported by DCMS, ACE, EH, MLA and SE funding of £208,000 in 2008, £200,000 in 2009, and £206,000 in 2010. The 2010/11 work programme is set out at Annex B.

In addition the NDPB partners also provide a range of support and guidance which is set out in 'An integrated national offer of support to councils to help them improve culture and Sport Services'. Further information about the project including publications can be found on IDeA Knowledge website: <http://www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pagelid=8722751>.

Recommendations and Project Management Board Response (PMB)

Recommendation 1: DCMS to establish stronger dialogue with other government departments to enable other local services to understand the opportunities for joint service delivery with the sector.

DCMS has put in place strategies to cover engagement with relevant departments (CLG, DCSF and DoH) and will keep the PMB updated, and seek PMB input into DCMS communications with other government departments. DCMS engagement with other government departments will be a standing item on future PMB agendas.

Recommendation 2: Opportunities to integrate national departments' inspection regimes should be explored.

While this would be a useful exercise, the PMB consider that it is likely that the current regimes will be altered going forward, so this is not a priority for the 2010/11 programme within the resource constraints.

Recommendation 3: PMB to commission research to explore the models of cross-authority working.

The IDeA programme for 2010/11 will include both a focus on strategic commissioning and the development of a new "efficiency offer" for councils. Both these will generate opportunities to investigate greater opportunities for cross-authority working and share the learning from these through IDeA Knowledge.

Recommendation 4: A common targeting methodology to be adopted across NDPBs to target resources at local authorities with the greatest need of support.

PMB believe that over the last two years the development of the "integrated national offer of support", the development of NDPB integrated regional planning, the implementation of culture and sport strategic dialogues and the creation of regional improvement leads working in association with regional improvement networks is creating the capacity and infrastructure to better co-ordinate and target support to councils within the constraints of the resources available and the different priorities of the NDPBs. Effort will continue to be made to focus limited capacity where need and opportunity is greatest. PMB partners will also continue to review this to ensure all the support available is being communicated effectively and all Local Authorities understand what is on offer.

Recommendation 5: NDPBs to review the level of resources and capacity directed to frontline engagement.

The PMB feel that it is not necessary to undertake a specific review as such resourcing is a matter for the individual organisations in the context of NDPB restructuring at a regional level. It is worth noting that priorities for frontline engagement have been fully considered and taken forward through both the integrated offer and the regional plans, which are routinely reviewed and updated.

Recommendation 6: PMB to review the potential inclusion of support tools relating to tourism and parks and public realm in the integrated offer of support.

IDeA is already working with Visit England, the tourism sector, Cabespace and the parks and open spaces sector to include them in the work of the project and develop relevant support and tools in the 'integrated national offer of support'. The current programme of work ends in March 2011, but any future programme will explore including tourism and parks and openspace colleagues in future work.

Recommendation 7: PMB partners to challenge Local Authorities to invest in skills development of their workforce

The PMB and the NCF led a workshop at the LGA/CLOA culture, sport and tourism conference on 31/03/10 where delegates were able to feed in ideas to develop sector skills. This will be now be taken forward by professional bodies through the National Culture Forum, with challenge and support from PMB partners.

Recommendation 8) Local Authority participation in the Cultural Leadership Programme and IDeA Member leadership academies is included as a key performance indicator in any revision of the improvement strategy.

The PMB agree that these are key elements of the strategy and should be measured as key performance indicators in the future. The 2010/11 IDeA work programme will continue to provide support to the Cultural Leadership Programme and further Member leadership academies in 2010/11. If and when the strategy is revised consideration will be given to how these elements are included and performance measured.

Recommendation 9: Guidance provided to Local Authorities as to the use of scrutiny powers to facilitate service improvement and joint delivery within the culture and sport sector.

Consideration will be given to how any future LGA/IDeA guidance on scrutiny can be used to stimulate consideration of the role of scrutiny in achieving better positioning and improving the performance of culture and sport services provided by councils and partners. English Heritage has already published guidance on Overview and Scrutiny Committees which can be found at <http://www.helm.org.uk/upload/pdf/MMYLH.pdf?1271760330>.

Recommendation 10: PMB partners to establish and regularly update an accurate, consolidated list of relevant stakeholders within each local authority.

The PMB agree that communicating with the right people in councils and other stakeholders across the regions is essential and recognise that the diverse and often complex service landscape in councils makes it difficult to deliver consistent and coherent information to them from a wide range of national bodies, to this end the PMB is working with existing regional culture and sport improvement networks to engage and communicate with regional partners. The LGA CTS newsletter is sent to several key

culture and sport contacts for each LA, and is available for all PMB partners to circulate relevant materials to councils.

Recommendation 11: PMB to explore the feasibility of establishing an interactive reference document and/or website that provides a single access point to all available support tools, case study examples and guidance materials.

The IDeA Knowledge website is the portal for all information relating to the culture and sport improvement programme. IDeA is exploring a more user friendly and interactive version of the 'integrated national offer of support' as part of their culture and sport site on Knowledge within the resources available.

Recommendation 12: PMB to establish a monitoring system to track the use of support tools from all NDPB partners on a regular basis.

The PMB recognises the importance of maintaining evidence of usage. The partners with tools in the 'integrated national offer of support' will monitor usage where possible taking account of any resource constraints.

Recommendation 13: PMB to focus resources on the delivery of the Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit (CSIT) and the Culture and Sport Strategic Dialogues (CSSDs) into Local Authorities

CSIT will continue to be promoted and supported by IDeA in 2010/11. The PMB has been piloting the delivery of CSSDs and there will be a shared learning process to disseminate learning through local government regional leads.

ANNEX A

CULTURE AND SPORT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT MANAGEMENT BOARD

Name	Organisation
Richard Russell	Arts Council England
Tricia Kilsby	Audit Commission
Richard Hunt	Culture & Leisure Officers Association / National Culture Forum
James Pender / Mabel Wanogho (Chair)	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
Owain Lloyd-James	English Heritage
Carolyn Ward	Government Office Network
Martyn Allison	Improvement and Development Agency
Steve Skelton	Local Government Association
Paul Bristow / Jennifer Ngyou	Museums, Libraries and Archives Council
Maria Reader / Ruth Alleyne	Sport England

ANNEX B

CULTURE AND SPORT IMPROVEMENT STRATEGY 2010/11 PROGRAMME

IDeA Knowledge (website)	Update knowledge, newsletters and alerts
Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit	Support and general updating
Member leadership academies	2 academies partnered with Manchester and Shropshire
Leading Learning	Bursaries and general support
Outcomes & impact measuring	Complete phases 2 and 3 and develop toolkit
Support to councils on commissioning and CAA	National, regional and sub regional awareness events Training and development - Heads of services. 3 events x 20 people Training and development - Options appraisal 4 events x 20 people (2 for members & 2 for officers)
Direct support to councils	National, regional and sub-regional awareness Training and development programme Tailored support to a small number of councils
Efficiency support	TBC

Core programme elements

The project board have confirmed their support for the following core elements and funding levels:-

- Two member leadership academies with a planned focus in at least one on Heritage
- Contribution to the Leading Learning programme in the form of bursaries
- Completion of the outcomes project

Direct support to councils

The project board have agreed a single integrated work stream of support to councils based on developing the sectors strategic commissioning capacity and responding the issues emerging in the CAA review. This work stream will also align with the member and officer leadership programmes and the measuring outcomes work stream.

The use of CSIT including self-assessment, peer challenge and review will continue to be offered to assist councils to improve their organisational management capacity on a self financing basis unless subsidised regionally through improvement networks.

This work stream has three levels:-

- National and regional awareness activity aimed at NDPBs, regional improvement networks and professional bodies so they can support the work and share learning with

other councils. This will include the use of Knowledge and regional communication structures.

- A programme of training in different aspects of the commissioning process aimed at heads of service and lead members.
- Tailored support to a small number of councils who “volunteer” to participate in the programme.

1. National, regional & sub-regional awareness

Regional workshops and ongoing dialogue with the key organisations and individuals supporting improvement work in councils will be offered to maximise understanding and awareness of the commissioning opportunity particularly in the context of improving outcomes and responding to the CAA. This will be based on the new “Understanding Commissioning” guide to be published in early April. Briefing and awareness events will hopefully be partnered by the regional improvement networks and professional bodies to limit costs.

2. Training and development programme.

Support to Heads of Culture and Sport

Three events (could be a residential) aimed at Heads of Service to enable them to understand the issues that strategic commissioning raises for them in their role. The role of Head of Service is key to the success of the commissioning process, particularly the provision of leadership necessary to achieve the changes required in delivery arrangements and build the effective relationships with commissioners and third sector partners. The curriculum will be based on the new “Understanding Commissioning” guidance document.

Option appraisal training

Four one day briefing events on option appraisal aimed at lead members (2 events) and heads of service (2 events) who are considering alternative delivery arrangements for their culture and sport services. Most interest is likely to focus on leisure management arrangements although increasingly councils are also looking at integrated arrangements for all their culture and sport services.

3. Tailored support to a small number of councils.

This element of the programme seeks to bring together a number of elements of improvement work into one integrated offer. It is premised on the following principles:-

- The CAA analysis which has again highlighted that in about two thirds of councils culture and sport has limited visibility in terms of positioning and demonstrating its contribution to meeting priority outcomes and priorities. Where the sector is well positioned there is evidence that it has been recognised in a range of Green Flags for the contribution it has made. The CAA analysis identifies a number of councils with Red Flags where culture and sport could be making a contribution to improving outcomes. This presents an opportunity to enable culture and sport providers to help their councils address Red Flags and in so doing transfer learning from the Green Flags councils who are already using culture and sport effectively. It may also present an opportunity to work with other IDeA programmes where they are supporting specific councils with Red Flags, the regional improvement networks where they exist, regional NDPBs where there are co-terminus priorities and potentially draw down some further RIEP funding.

- Strategic commissioning represents the key process whereby culture and sport can not only engage with and contribute to these wider issues and priorities but potentially be paid to do so. The recent research however shows the sector is not yet equipped to take these opportunities for a range of reasons; awareness and understanding, lack of leadership, fragmented structures, poor engagement with the right partnerships, lack of capacity in the third sector and a lack of evidence and weaknesses in performance management mechanisms. By using the commissioning process we have an opportunity to redress poor positioning and potentially generate much needed income streams. Both this and the above CAA issue have also ongoing implications for the “Total Place” concept currently being piloted.
- The analysis of NI data suggests that there is a significant risk that many LAA culture and sport improvement targets may not be achieved. By aligning support with work to address Red Flags there may in some instances be a new incentive to also improve participation levels and meet outstanding targets. Learning from last years support programme highlights some of the difficulties in engaging councils in support activity where they may not be entirely convinced about the need. By starting with councils who want support to address improvement there is a possibility that impact will be greater and quicker.

In summary this work stream will seek to work with a small number of volunteer councils who wish to address their Red Flags by commissioning culture and sport providers. In so doing they will improve LAA delivery, generate new income streams for culture and sport services and help improve the long term positioning of culture and sport in these councils. Where appropriate there may also be opportunities to align with Total Place pilots.

In each case the exact offer will be tailored to suit local circumstances and need. However the offer could include the following elements.

1. An action learning programme

This element will be aimed at all culture and sport staff and be based around the ‘Understanding Commissioning’ guide as a ‘curriculum’ or workbook resource and the exercises as the training course material.

2. Research and challenge model

This element would involve undertaking some ‘mapping of the commissioning landscape’ in the authority and feeding back challenges and opportunities as was done in the ‘Better outcomes for children’ research.

The benefits of an independent person doing the research and mapping is that they can focus on what the commissioners want and how they see the world. They can also identify the barriers and opportunities from that independent and ‘no-history’ perspective. The work would primarily but not solely focus on the identified Red Flag areas.

This approach was done as part of the original research and is already being done in parts of the North-West for a Renaissance project and also being piloted in East Riding council.

3. Bespoke packages on specific elements of commissioning

For example needs assessment, option appraisal, performance management, partnership working and consortia building, and capacity building for the third sector

including an awareness event for local third sector culture and sport organisations interested in engaging with the commissioning process.

4. Making an impact on a specific outcome

This core element of the package will concentrate on the specific Red Flag issue that needs improvement. It will assess with the providers what the culture and sport sector can do to contribute to that outcome and support them engage with commissioners and partners. This may involve capacity building for the statutory and voluntary partners and could involve some creative workshops and innovatory thinking. It is hoped to link this work with other teams within IDeA where they are also supporting Red Flag improvement, regional NDPB staff and regional improvement networks where they are operating. There may also be opportunities to create links with and share learning from councils who have been awarded Green Flags in similar circumstances.

£50,000 is available to support about 5-7 councils. It is suggested that initial expressions of interest are invited from the councils from this a final list of partner councils can be agreed. Nominations should be sought initially through regional NDPBs and where in place regional improvement networks perhaps stimulated through culture and sport strategic dialogues where these are planned.

Attached is a draft list of councils that potentially could be partners in the programme. They have Red Flags that could be assisted by a contribution from culture and sport and may be a priority for other IDeA teams and NDPBs regionally. Some, but not all have culture and sport LAA improvement targets and in some cases there is already a working relationship. Total place pilots are also shown.

Response to the evaluation report

Based on a review of the recommendations in the project evaluation the project board have asked that further investigation takes place on the following recommendations with notional sums included in the final programme at this stage:-

1. *Work to demonstrate good practice in terms of cross authority working as part of efficiency improvements.* This will need to be seen in a wider context of guidance or support relating to new models of management and service delivery and also be linked to the commissioning work.
2. *The production of a new interactive or better designed version of the integrated offer to councils to improve awareness and accessibility by councils.* This will involve investigating if a better way of providing the information can be found as part of the Knowledge web site.