

Information Sheet

Creative Professionals: A Guide to Starting Out

Do your research

Look for theatres, venues, galleries, agencies, organisations or companies sympathetic to your type of practice. Research what they do.

Introduce yourself, get to know them and try to build a relationship. There's no 'right' way to do this, however it is advisable to keep initial emails short and to the point.

Lengthy emails overloaded with examples of your work can be off-putting and time-consuming to read. Include

- your artistic CV
- an artist statement explaining your work
- a link to your website
- a few examples of your work

It's advisable not to send out a generic email to everyone on your list, but to ensure you tailor the message to each recipient.

It can be disheartening to receive rejections and you won't always get a response. Perseverance is key. If you get a negative response, move onto the next one. Not all will think your work is suitable for their programme.

Becoming self-employed

In order to be a self-employed practicing artist you need to develop a range of business skills. These include

- marketing yourself and your work
- administration
- developing an on-line presence
- budgeting and financial management
- business planning

If you are earning an income from your practice you must register as self-employed. It sounds daunting but it is easier than you think.

There's a wealth of information and advice to be found on the [HMRC website](#). Make sure you file all paperwork/receipts regularly.

Get networked

Get on invite lists for events, conferences, openings and sign up for newsletters from organisations you are interested in. You should also follow them on social media. This will make it easier to stay up to date with any news and opportunities to meet like-minded peers and form links with artists-led groups and venues that show the work that inspires you.

Relationships need to be nurtured, so follow up quickly by email with people you meet to try and develop a conversation.

Document your work

Get in the habit of documenting your work and the process. It is possible to do it yourself, save money and learn new skills - but do it professionally. It's important to have images, videos or audio files of your work available at short notice. Your online presence is shop window for your work.

Digital images, audio-visual files and web links are the usual method of documenting works as they can be sent quickly online. Get to know the resolution of your images for printing and the file sizes for emails.

Don't rely too heavily on file sharing sites (such as Dropbox) as not all organisations will be able to access them. It's worth checking the preferred way of receiving examples of your work and having a few options to choose from so you're always prepared.

People may not always have much time to look at your work. So tailor what you send. Keep it short.

Show your work online

Register with online databases that present work to a wide audience and link your work to the wider sector.

Some database services are free but subscription based sites have a range of features and opportunities as part of the membership. Consider your own website and social media presence ensuring that it is kept up to date.

[View some for tips on using social media here](#) (Guardian website)

Community

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.

Opportunities

Subscribe to networks and newsletters that are relevant to your practice. Benefits can include access to opportunities, knowledge and a UK wide profile.

Look on the Arts Council of Wales and Wales Arts International websites for news of opportunities as well as our online [Arts Directory](#).

Applications and Proposals

Read application forms and guidance carefully. Write clearly and avoid 'Art speak'. Remember whoever is reading the proposal will not be as familiar with your work as you are.

What you think is obvious may only be obvious to you. Many applications are unsuccessful as they do not properly address the criteria. Proposals should be focussed and tailored to the organisation. If there are opportunities to ask for feedback, do so.

Always learning

Exploit training opportunities to equip you with the necessary skills to manage your professional practice, nurture confidence and develop you as an artist.

Ensure that you keep your business skills up to date as well as your artistic practice. Use your networks to develop critical friends who could help you to develop your practice further.

Balancing your time

During your artistic career it is highly likely that you will have to take alternative employment to support yourself.

Try to find a balance and be mindful of how different types of work may impact on your artistic practice. In order to sustain and develop your practice, you need to ensure that you can commit regular time to it.

Being professional

Be clear about your career aims and objectives and stick with them. Spend time getting to know your market and develop an action plan that will help you achieve your goals.

Start by thinking about the detail - is your email address appropriate? Does it represent you? Do you have old photos on your Facebook profile that you'd rather your potential clients didn't see?

Consider setting up separate 'professional' accounts or pages to help you keep the work/play sides of your practice distinct.

A separate bank account for your business could make your life easier when it comes to tax return time, though there's no legal requirement to do this as a sole trader.

Know your worth

We expect artists and creative professionals to be paid appropriately for the work that they do.

To ensure that you are asking for an appropriate fee, research industry standards. Links are provided later in this document.

If you are selling work, research your value in relation to other artists who sell their work.

Visual Artists

a-n The Artists Information Company

a-n stimulates and supports contemporary visual arts practice and affirms artists' value in society.

With over 19,000 members, they focus on conversations around the critical and professional environment for the visual arts, bringing together artists, art students, producers, arts professionals, researchers, arts organisations and universities. a-n has advice on current rates for visual artists.

Email: info@a-n.co.uk

Website: www.a-n.co.uk

For information on the [Paying Artists Campaign, click here](#).

Theatre Practitioners

Independent Theatre Council

ITC is the management association for theatre's independent sector. It is a community of peers spread across the UK working in drama, dance, opera and musical theatre, mime and physical theatre, circus, puppetry, street arts and mixed media.

Phone: 020 7403 1727

Email: admin@itc-arts.org

Website: www.itc-arts.org

Actors, Singers and Dancers

Equity

Equity is the UK trade union for professional performers and creative practitioners.

As a leading industry organisation, Equity is known and respected nationally and internationally for the work it does with, and on behalf of, its members working across all areas of the entertainment industry.

For general helpdesk enquiries:

Telephone: 020 7379 6000

Email: info@equity.org.uk

For the Wales & SW England Regional Office:

Phone: 029 2039 7971

Email: wales@equity.org.uk / cymru@equity.org.uk,

Website: www.equity.org.uk

Musicians

Musicians' Union

The Musicians' Union is a globally-respected organisation which represents over 30,000 musicians working in all sectors of the music business.

As well as negotiating on behalf of musicians with all the major employers in the industry, the MU offers a range of services tailored for the self-employed by providing assistance for professional and student musicians of all ages.

For general industry enquiries:

Phone: 020 7582 5566

Email: info@musiciansunion.org.uk

For the Wales & SW England Regional Office:

Phone: 029 2045 6585

Email: cardiff@theMU.org

Website: www.musiciansunion.org.uk

Technical staff

BECTU

BECTU is the UK's media and entertainment trade union; sectors covered include broadcasting, film, independent production, theatre and the arts, leisure and digital media.

Phone: 020 7346 0900

Email: info@bectu.org.uk

Website: www.bectu.org.uk

Writers

Literature Wales

Literature Wales represents the interests of Welsh writers in all genres and languages, both inside Wales and internationally. It offers advice, support, bursaries, mentoring and opportunities to meet other writers.

Phone: 029 20 472 266

Email: post@literaturewales.org

Website: www.literaturewales.org

Writers' Guild

The Writers' Guild of Great Britain is the trade union representing writers in TV, radio, theatre, books, poetry, film, online and video games.

In TV, film, radio and theatre, the Guild is the recognised body for negotiating minimum terms and practice agreements for writers.

Phone: 020 7833 0777

Email: admin@writersguild.org.uk

Website: www.writersguild.org.uk

Useful Contacts

Please note that this is intended to be a good starting point rather than an exhaustive list.

Many of our Revenue Funded Organisations (RFOs) have a remit to help develop artists.
[Find out more about our RFOs, click here.](#)

Performing Arts

The Association of Dance of the African Diaspora: www.adad.org.uk

Akademi (UK): www.akademi.co.uk

Association of Independent Musicians: www.musicindie.com

Circus futures: circusfutures.org

Complete Music Update: www.completemusicupdate.com

Coreo Cymru (Wales): www.coreocymru.com

Creu Cymru: www.creucymru.com

Featured Artists Coalition: thefac.org

Ffilm Cymru Wales: www.ffilmcymruwales.com

Help Musicians UK: www.helpmusicians.org.uk

Music Export Growth scheme: www.bpi.co.uk/megs.aspx

MusicTank: www.musictank.co.uk

National Theatre Wales: nationaltheatrewales.org/waleslab

People Dancing - Foundation for Community Dance (UK): www.communitydance.org.uk

PRS: www.prsformusicfoundation.com

The Place: www.theplace.org.uk

The Stage: www.thestage.co.uk

Theatre in Wales: www.theatre-wales.co.uk

Wales Association for the Performing Arts: www.waparts.org.uk

Visual and Applied Art

a-n The Artists Information Company: www.a-n.co.uk/news

Art Quest: www.artquest.org.uk

Association for Contemporary Jewellery: www.acj.org.uk

Axis Artists Resource and Database: www.axisweb.org

Crafts Scotland: www.craftscotland.org

Design Wales: www.designwales.org.uk

Makers Guild in Wales/Craft in the Bay: www.makersguildinwales.org.uk

Studio Pottery: www.studiopottery.co.uk

The Crafts Council: www.craftscouncil.org.uk

UK Craft Websites: www.ukcraftwebsites.co.uk

WARP: Wales Artists Resource Programme: www.g39.org/warp

Artists Databases and networks

ARC (Artists Resource Cardiff): www.artcardiff.com

Digital Women's Network: www.digitalwomensnetwork.org

Women's Arts Association: www.womensarts.co.uk

Arts Information Sites

Art Rabbit: Art Listings: www.artrabbit.com

Arts Catalyst: Art and Science: www.artscatalyst.org

Performance Wales: Database and Archive: www.performance-wales.org

Public Art Online (Ixia): www.publicartonline.org.uk

Re-title: Artists Directory and Event Listings: www.re-title.com

Other useful links

ArtQuest (ArtLaw): www.artquest.org.uk/artlaw.htm

Arts and Business Wales: www.artsandbusiness.org.uk

Arts Development UK: artsdevelopmentuk.org

Native: Digital R&D Fund for the Arts: artsdigitalrnd.org.uk

Bloc: Creative Technology Wales: www.bloc.org.uk

British Council: wales.britishcouncil.org

Business Wales: business.wales.gov.uk

Creative and Cultural Skills: ccskills.org.uk

Creative Skillset: creativeskillset.org

Cult Cymru: www.cultcymru.org

Cyfle: www.cyfle.co.uk

Design and Artists Copyright Society (DACS): www.dacs.org.uk

Disability Arts Cymru: www.disabilityartscymru.co.uk

Digital technology developments: mashable.com

HM Revenue and Customs: www.hmrc.gov.uk/selfemployed/

Intellectual Property: www.own-it.org

Nesta: www.nesta.org.uk

Nesta: www.nesta.org.uk/publications/creative-enterprise-toolkit

Voluntary Arts Wales: www.vaw.org.uk

Wales Arts International: www.wai.org.uk