

Arts and Homelessness International Strategic Plan 2020-25 Executive Summary



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A note on what a strategy is

A Strategy is a plan that charities create to demonstrate what their goals will be and how they will achieve them over a period of time, usually 3-5 years. It's like a roadmap where they set out why they exist and what they plan to do in that period of time. It is almost always created following a process of discussion with everyone connected with the charity – staff, board, volunteers, beneficiaries, funders, colleagues in the sector. Arts and Homelessness International is co-produced with 50% of board and staff made up of people who are or have been homeless so the strategy has been created in the same way, facilitated by Sara Robinson.

1. Introduction

With One Voice (WOV) was created at the London 2012 Cultural Olympiad as a showcase of the artist talents and achievements of people who are or have been homeless from around the UK. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and Cultural Olympiad had wanted to welcome homeless people into the Olympic celebrations and Streetwise Opera took on the organisation of an event at the Royal Opera House. The event was called With One Voice.

This event brought together the fragmented arts and homelessness sector for the first time (over 30 projects and around 300 performers who, themselves, had wanted to show the world their skills not their problems). An invitation to Rio 2016 followed and through research and consultation with the Brazilian sector leading up to the Olympiad, the project focussed on not only bringing the local sector together but projects from around the world who connected with each other and gave each other ideas and strength.

This became the start of WOV as both a global movement that would connect projects, people and policy with the ultimate aim of demonstrating that the arts has a fundamental place in the support of people who are or have been homeless.

From 2016-20, WOV worked with over 150 projects from around the world; organised exchanges in Brazil, Canada, UK and Japan; organised the first International Arts and Homelessness Summit which was attended by 250 delegates from 18 countries; commissioned the first International Arts and Homelessness Literature Review and brought about policy change in Manchester, UK where the homelessness strategy now includes the arts.

By 2019, WOV had grown to a point where it was clear that it should become an independent organisation in its own right and left Streetwise Opera in April of that year, becoming a charity in June 2019 with 50% of its board and staff team comprised of people who are or have been homeless.

This is our second Strategic Plan, the first as an independent company and now under our new name of Arts and Homelessness International. It has been co-produced from design to delivery with the board and staff team, a group of critical friends and input from the international sector. To all those who have been involved in this journey, a heartfelt thank you. As you will see, our plans are ambitious and bold as we embark on a new chapter to support people who have been affected by homelessness and the whole international sector through the power of arts and creativity.

2. The Process of Creating our New Strategic Plan

- June-Sept 2019 – discussions with staff and board of WOV
- Sept-Nov 2019 – co-produced meetings with board, staff and critical friends
- Oct-Nov 2019 – questionnaire to international sector
- Feb-March 2020 – testing of ideas

3. Where We've Come From – the 2016-20 Strategic Plan

WOV's first strategic plan set out to bring projects and people together into a 'movement' or community for the first time. Our mission was to 'Create a global arts and homelessness movement which strengthens, inspires and promotes arts and homelessness projects throughout the world through exchange'. Our aims were:

- To strengthen existing arts and homelessness activity
- To inspire new arts and homelessness activity
- To increase awareness of the importance of arts for people with experience of homelessness globally
- To influence policy in relation to homelessness and the arts

We brought people, projects and policy makers together for the first time in annual practice/ideas exchanges; we listened to what they needed and we took action.

Key themes emerged such as the need for the sector to make the case more so we commissioned the first [Literature Review of Arts and Homelessness](#) which brought together 61 pieces of research to demonstrate that arts has impacts on people who are or have been homeless through building resilience, agency, well-being and knowledge/skills. At the same time, we co-produced an advocacy tool, the [Jigsaw of Homeless Support](#) which showed how the arts should be part of a jigsaw of services for homeless people. Co-production became more and more important as the sector realises that they should be 'with not for' homeless people. No mapping of arts and homelessness had ever been done and in 2020 there are 400 projects on our on-line map. There was an overwhelming message that people wanted to get together to learn from each other and support each other. We learned from cultural spaces across the world that their buildings were being used more and more by homeless people and they wanted to deepen access and involvement for homeless people but didn't know how – we commissioned a review of Cultural Spaces' Responses to Homelessness, published in March 2020 with a training package and free toolkit.

Like all homeless organisations, we would prefer not to exist but where there is homelessness, we are passionate that arts and creativity should be embedded into services and systems so that people who have been homeless have a chance to thrive not just survive.

4. Key Themes Emerging from Consultation

Results from an International Questionnaire (Sept-Oct 2019)

The questionnaire was sent to 150 recipients around the world including projects, artists, policy-makers and academics (slightly over 20% of whom were people who are or have been homeless). There were 59 respondents and most were arts/homelessness projects so this will affect the responses. Below are the main responses:

From the questionnaire and internal discussions and sessions with critical friends, the main themes coming out of the consultation process are:

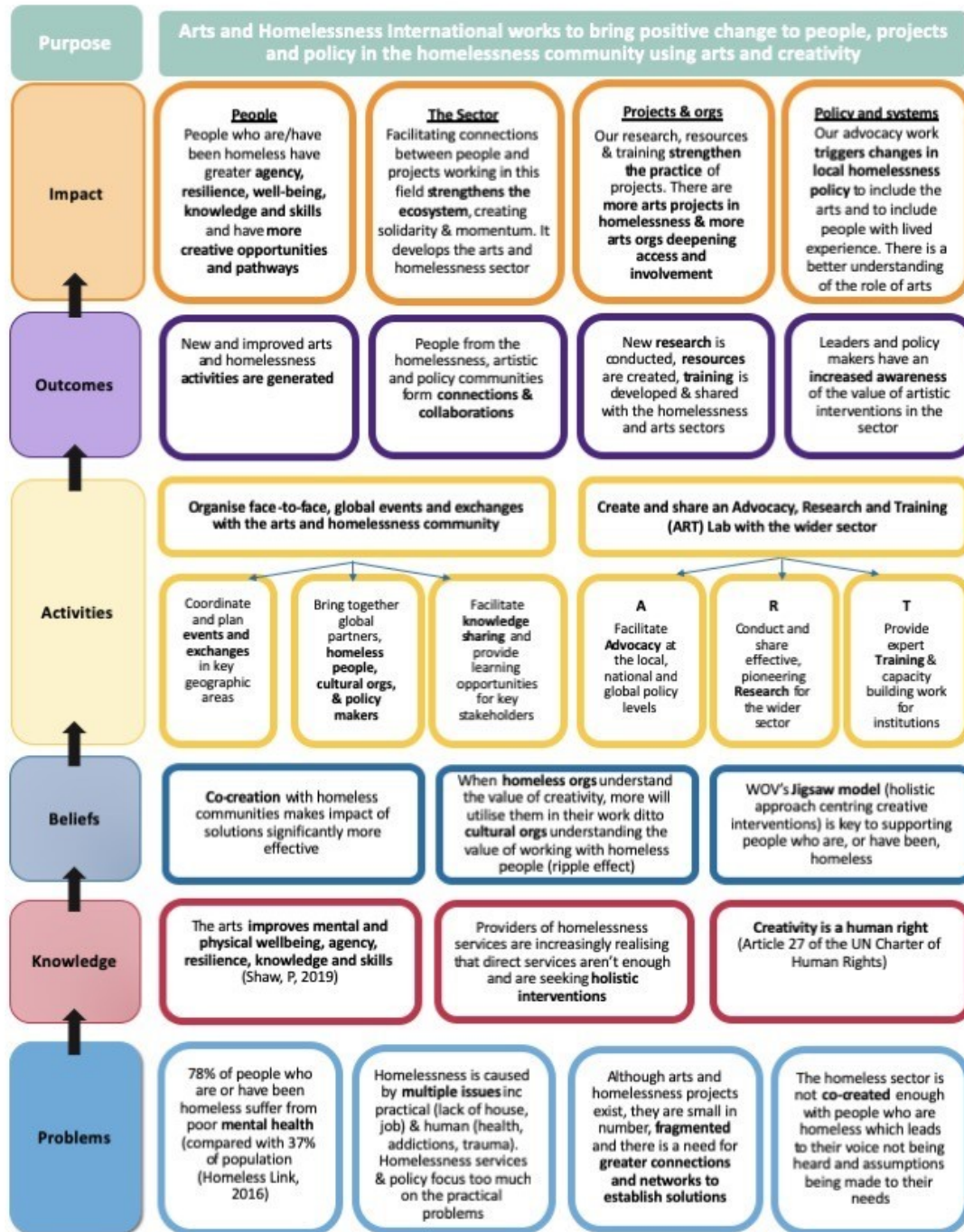
- It's about people – people should be in the centre. We are passionate about genuine co-production (not consultation or involvement but true equity)
- Connections and exchange are so important to people we work with.
- Face-to-face connections are magical – how do we retain this magic when we are geographically spread?
- Creativity needs to run through everything we do.
- We are arts activists in our world and can own that.
- We have endless ambition but a finite number of staff members. How do we create the biggest impact with our resources?
- Running a network/movement compared with, say an arts project, is complex we need clarity – clear aims and plans.
- The community wants us to advocate for the work and make the case – be a leader and a champion to show why and how arts and creativity are so important in the homeless sector.
- We and our community want to deepen our work in countries in the global south while also continuing working in Olympic cities/countries since it gives credibility and it is important to fight injustice.
- We need to communicate the 'so what' of what we do



5. The New Name

During the planning process, we realised that the name 'With One Voice' has become problematic. There are a few reasons for this: There are a few orgs with the same or similar names in the sector; there is confusion about what it means not only in terms of the misunderstanding that it is about singing but also because it is not about 'one' voice but a multitude of voices. We co-created a group of names within the WOV team and voted with each member of staff and Trustee able to vote on their top 3. The name getting most votes and the top score was **Arts and Homelessness International**.

6. Theory of Change



Arts and Homelessness International - Theory of Change

7. Vision, Mission, Aims and Activities, Values

Vision

A world in which creativity is an integral part of homeless communities, people who are or have been homeless are an intrinsic part of the arts and art plays a role in creating systemic changes.

Mission

Arts and Homelessness International works to bring positive change to people, projects and policy in the homelessness community through arts and creativity

Aims

- To connect people from the arts and homelessness community together around the world
- To strengthen the arts and homelessness community around the world
- To advocate for the role of the arts in the homeless community around the world

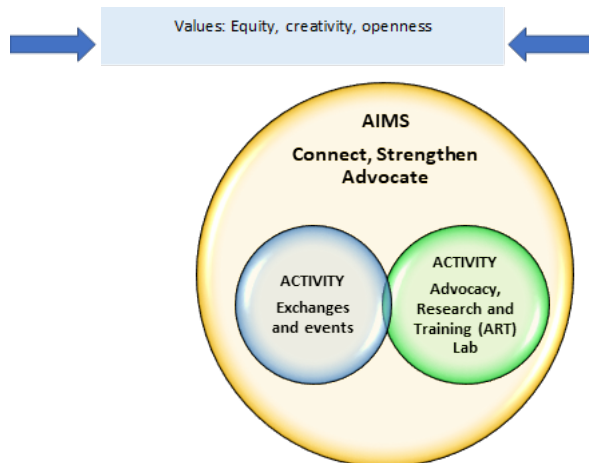
Activities

- We organise annual exchanges and events with the arts and homelessness community globally
- We run an ART (Advocacy, Research and Training) Laboratory which is a place to help the sector make the case for its work, produce research, resources, explore new models and ways of working and capacity building for projects and people working in this field. This capacity building works throughout towns and cities through policy, projects and people to create a whole 'city plan' of arts and homelessness

Values – the beliefs that run through everything

- **Equity** – co-production runs through everything we do from planning to design. We will always have at least 50% representation of people who are or have been homeless on our board and staff. We want to show a genuine shift in power through viable alternative employment and leadership models for people who are or have been homeless
- **Creativity** – our work is about creativity so we should embody this in all our work from the way we plan activity to the way we run meetings and deliver speeches, training session, events etc

- **Openness** – we are an open and generous organisation. All our materials are accessible, clear and jargon free. We are kind to each other and those around us. We go the extra mile



8. The impacts – the change we want to see

- **Individual Lives:** People who are/have been homeless have greater agency, resilience, well-being, knowledge and skills and have more creative opportunities
- **The Movement:** Facilitating connections between people and projects working in this field strengthens the ecosystem, creating solidarity & momentum. Better understanding of the role of the arts
- **Organisations and Projects:** Our research, resources & training strengthen the practice of projects. There are more arts projects in homelessness & more arts orgs deepening access and involvement
- **Policy and Systems:** Our advocacy work triggers changes in local homelessness policy to include the arts and to include people with lived experience

9. Priorities – our areas of focus for 2020-25

To develop an Advocacy, Research and Training (ART) Lab.

In helping to build a sector from fragmented projects, it has always been clear that we need to help make the case for arts and homelessness. We have done this through

resources and research including **The Jigsaw of Homeless Support** to the **International Arts and Homelessness Literature Review**. We are now going to bring this work under a new umbrella, the ‘**ART Lab**’ (Advocacy, Research and Training/capacity building Laboratory). This will be a place for co-created innovation, testing and meeting issues in our sector with new perspectives.

We were going to take our time over the 5 years of the strategy to co-design a model and a way of working but C-19 has resulted in us needing to respond quickly to the pandemic with new ideas. These include creating on-line resources around starting mobile libraries in hotels and a database of arts activities for people who are isolated. C-19 is also presenting huge, unplanned opportunities around the value the creativity has in the social welfare sector and for the sector to reach more people in isolation and we are working to facilitate some testing and understanding in these areas.

To work more in countries in the Global South

We want to work more in the **Global South** countries which is an area not only underrepresented in our field but a place of such un-tapped knowledge that we want to enable the rest of the world to exchange ideas for mutual benefit. We are a small team and need to take care of capacity so, over the next five years, we will go **deeper rather than wider** in our current relationships in ODA ([Overseas Development Aid countries](#)) countries, currently **Brazil, Jamaica, Sierra Leone and India, Colombia and Myanmar**. We will work on ideas of how to do this. It could be achieved through a combination of a small network of hubs in different regions or creating more on-line sharing ideas. Meanwhile we will commit to working in **Paris** for the **Cultural Olympiad in 2024** but will scale back on the number of exchanges from previous Olympiads (2 instead of 3 or 4). This will allow for more capacity for the Global South work.

To develop a mixed subsidised-earned income plan

WOV is committed to supporting everyone in the sector – the **people and organisations in most need are often the least likely to be able to pay**. At the same time, there is evidence that some orgs will be able to pay for our services (especially cultural spaces wanting to deepen access and involvement for people who are or have been homeless). In this way, we will develop a plan where we commit to subsidising work while also being open to work in other areas as paid-for capacity-building (e.g. Coventry City of Culture 2021).

Now we are in the middle of a pandemic, we are having to re-frame all of our training to on-line models which is an opportunity to increase the reach of our work.