



Social Responsibility

This document is intended to be a set of guidelines that arts organisations, however large or small, commit to and apply for social responsibility. These guidelines should extend appropriately to the artists they employ in whatever way, as employees or as freelance workers, as well as the volunteers and interns they engage.

What is social responsibility?

Social responsibility is the responsibility an organisation must take for the impact its decisions and activities have on society and the wider environment, and recognising those impacts to maximise its contribution to sustainable development and economic, environmental and social improvements.

Why should an organisation commit to achieving social responsibility?

Social responsibility carries within it the high hopes and expectations of its creators and of future generations who depend on us to pass on the natural, social and economic resources that we have inherited or created. Arts organisations should be at the forefront of this ethos, of not diminishing but improving their sustainability – economically, socially, and environmentally, to improve the impact they have on their workforce, artists and the communities they work with and within. By doing so you can achieve a more sustainable development for your organisation and, importantly, make your organisation a model of good practice within the arts and somewhere that people want to work in and with.

How is this achieved?

There are already available guidelines for achieving social responsibility. An existing standard from the International Organisation for Standards (ISO) is ISO26000. Whilst this is a global standard for corporate organisations its core subjects can be applied to arts organisations in England. A useful handbook for small and medium organisations is available from [Ecologia](http://www.ecologia.org/isosr/ISO26000Handbook.pdf) that offers guidance on and in implementing the seven core subjects that an organisation should respect and apply to work in a socially responsible way*.

* See Handbook for Implementers of ISO 26000, Global Guidance Standard on Social Responsibility Designed by ECOLOGIA for Small and Medium Sized Businesses. <http://www.ecologia.org/isosr/ISO26000Handbook.pdf>

Achieving the seven core subjects of ISO26000 and the issues they contain will integrate social responsibility and sustainable development into an organisation's policies, organisational culture, strategies and operation, and overarching goal for sustainable development.

Climate change & environment

Arts Council England offers more specific environment policy and action plan guidelines for the visual arts sector acting on climate change and environmental issues <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/resilience-and-sustainability/environmental-programme>

Apprenticeships & volunteers

The Creative & Cultural Skills organisation offers guidelines for organisations working with apprenticeships

https://ccs.rooftop.io/sites/413/2020/03/11221516/Apprenticeship_Standards_PDF_15112019.pdf

and for organisations working with volunteers and interns in the arts

<https://ccs.rooftop.io/sites/413/2020/04/02153409/Best-Practice-Recruitment-Guide-for-Creative-Leaders-CCS-branded.pdf>

There is linkage between all the above guidelines and policies which can complement each other. They do not offer legal and contractual requirements, nor are they appropriate for certification purposes or regulatory or contractual use. They do however offer a way forward for achieving accreditation and for reporting on meeting the guideline aims and policies.

Community

Arts organisations working with community stakeholders is nothing new, yet the effectiveness of this practice for positive social change is still time specific and still subject to ongoing action research (e.g. Arts Council England's *Creative People and Places*). Public sector commissioning is now subject to the Social Value Act of 2012 that has to consider how the procurement of services will contribute to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the area in which this commissioning is undertaken. Yet cost is still a consideration, and the presumption that more budget equals better sustainability does not necessarily align (recent cultural mega-events demonstrate that the arts do not necessarily increase the long term well-being of certain sectors of our society). The NPC's report of 2014 on its [Cultural Commissioning Programme: Opportunities for alignment](#) has recommendations for Arts Council England in that arts organisations 'will need ongoing training and support to position themselves to take advantage of commissioning opportunities.'