

**FIRSTSITE
ACE NATIONAL PORTFOLIO ORGANISATION (NPO)
2018/2022 APPLICATION PROPOSAL**

1. Vision and Mission

1.1 Vision: A thriving art gallery and a vibrant cultural organisation that is valued and admired locally, regionally and internationally, and which significantly serves diverse communities.

1.2 Mission: To inspire people through innovative art and culture that contributes to the wellbeing, learning and economy of the surrounding areas.

1.3 We will achieve this through the way we work, as informed by our values:

Inclusivity: equality of access and opportunity combined with best practice to help engage with our audiences, artists, hard-to-reach groups, partners, suppliers and staff.

Quality: the use of analytics to help us continuously improve customer experience and how we work and make decisions, to ensure we make measureable impacts.

Innovation: working collaboratively with our stakeholders, partners and funders to ensure we are continuously looking for better ways of working and delivering higher returns on investment.

Professionalism: adopting best practice in all that we do to ensure that we are well governed, well managed and seen as an effective asset for the communities we serve.

1.4 Our radical Colcestrian past and our extraordinary and unconventional award-winning building are our inspiration for being a centre for experimentation in cultural production. At Firstsite our approach places visitor experience and community engagement first, informing this with evidence-based insight. We are responding to the changing role of the gallery in the post-internet age by becoming imaginative facilitators of a shared vision, so that we can remain relevant in the long-term.

2. GOAL 1 – Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the Arts

2.1 The artistic or cultural outcomes of our proposal

Three 'Golden Threads' run throughout our activity to ensure that the integrity of our values, vision and mission are reflected in artistic and cultural outcomes.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: making what we are doing relevant for a broad range of people who are reflective of the protected characteristic groups most relevant in our area.

Social Mobility: Ensuring difficult-to-reach audiences are engaged directly or indirectly, and inspiring, motivating and making a difference to their learning, health and social wellbeing through creative endeavors.

Digital, experimentation and innovation: providing a platform for artists, young people and future innovators to encourage exploration of digital creativity, and making potential contributions to the economic wellbeing of the region.

2.2 At Firstsite we are shifting the negative perception of contemporary art and galleries as 'elitist and closed-off places for a privileged few' to being 'open, welcoming and relevant to everyone' by being relentless and rigorous in how we listen and encourage engagement. We will continue to do this to ensure we deliver desired outcomes. More specifically we have:

- A planned programme of engagement with arts organisations and entities within the region, contributing to joined-up thinking. This includes our contribution to the Creative Essex Strategy and Plan.
- Collaboration with other arts organisations in Colchester. This includes a Memorandum of Understanding, referencing joint training of staff and shared project activities with the Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre (CAC) and Colchester & Ipswich Museum Services (CIMS).
- Proactively engaging communities through resource-light means, listening to their ideas in open conversation. This has already led to their involvement in our governance and advisory groups, new learning activities and creative and cultural events.
- Working with artists in the region to uncover their individual needs and help realise their ideas through our artistic programme and through the potential that our extraordinary building offers.

2.3 Artistic Programme 2018-22

Over the grant period we will deliver an inspiring programme of exhibitions, artist and 'art-house' films, public art works and collaborative community engagement projects with artists at their centre. In this programme we will combine experimental approaches with traditional methods, helping to inspire existing and future cultural producers and consumers.

We want to be simultaneously smart with our resources and ambitious in the quality of our content. We want to lead the way in making new work and an impactful difference with our partners to genuinely inspire many people from many backgrounds, making Firstsite 'First for Everyone'. The programme therefore includes a number of strands responding to the possibilities that different areas of our building offer, and reflecting the varying needs of our stakeholders.

Each year Firstsite will deliver:

1. Year-round activity, meaning there is always something to see on any day that Firstsite is open to the public, even during install periods. This is achieved through:
 - One annual 'mural' to substantially animate the main public areas inside Firstsite (primarily the long curved wall)
 - A continuous and interconnected film programme in our auditorium, including free artist films, which visitors can drop in on between ticketed/commercial and programmed activities.
 - An annual 'Wunderkammer' project (in collaboration with CIMS) in the mosaic area, showing curated selections of local collections to chime with temporary exhibitions
2. A minimum of 6-8 overlapping temporary exhibitions in our main gallery spaces, incorporating work by regional artists, national and international guest artists and outcomes from collaborative projects such as Radical Essex, ECVAN, John Ball and The Britishness Project – all of which are outlined later in this proposal.
3. A programme of weekly learning-based and public engagement events. These are designed to: respond to exhibition content and the four Annual Themes outlined below; enrich visitor experience, leading to longer and more repetitive visits, and attract new audiences from groups outlined in Goal 2.

2.4 In response to one-to-one consultations, and conversations with our stakeholders and audiences, we have created four Annual Themes inspired by our specific heritage and local context. The themes have been shaped to ensure we can invite reflection from a diverse

range of people, believing that these conversations are as much universal as they are locally specific.

2018/19 Conflict & Culture

Colchester is a historic garrison town, home to the armed forces since the Roman occupation 2000 years ago. The 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War in 2018 enables us to reflect on this in a rich and engaging way with a broad range of communities and artists.

2019/20 Digital Technology & Innovation

Connecting with Colchester's identity as a digital creative hub and the University of Essex programme will enable us to investigate fully the impact of digital technologies on creative practices and exhibition making.

2020/21 Landscape & Wellbeing

Derived from the legacy of artists such as John Constable, the influence of the Essex landscape and our relationship with the local NHS Trust (and social care entities within the region) will enable us to celebrate art in the landscape and the connection between wellbeing and nature.

2021/22 Science, Art & the Imagination.

Colchester is the historical home of some scientific and cultural legends such as William Gilbert (inventor of the term 'electricity') and Jane Taylor (author of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'). 2021 is also the 10th anniversary of our award winning building.

2.5 Evidence that supports the quality of our work – excerpts from peer, stakeholder, audience and participant reviews

Since the appointment of Firstsite's new Director Sally Shaw, in April 2016, we have created a wealth of evidence – both quantitative and qualitative – of the success of our new approach. The three case studies outline how our Golden Threads are beginning to emerge in impactful and inspiring ways.

Social Mobility

Flipside – a two-week festival of art and cultural activities by and for young people from diverse backgrounds. Arising from Circuit, funded by Paul Hamlyn Foundation, this short festival had significant impact on engagement with young people and on broader communication between Firstsite and non-arts audiences unfamiliar with the organisation. The project developed over a number of years in advance of the two-week festival.

Charlotte Winters, aged 18. Young Artists Kommunity member and now co-opted Board member: 'When I first joined YAK I was pretty damn terrified of Firstsite, let alone the people within it. Now its one of my favourite places to be and has given me chances to do things I never even dreamt of. But most importantly to me to be in a group of people I feel at home around and supported by, something I haven't had in a long time.'

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Veteran's Day at Firstsite – A collaboration with the Mayor of Colchester Cllr Julie Young and the Invicta Foundation. One hundred veterans and their families were invited for lunch at Firstsite after the Remembrance Sunday parade in Colchester Town Centre. Following the lunch, Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller gave a talk about his artwork '*we're here because we're here*'. The event was sold out and the audience included veterans, serving members of the military as well as culture fans. We now have new volunteers from families in the services, new hires for events and new audiences.

Social innovations

Syrian Pop-Up Café – One of Firstsite's earliest conversations was with Refugee Action - Colchester, who were in need of a space to celebrate Eid with refugee families new to the town. This successful event led to Refugee Action - Colchester hosting a pop-up café in the restaurant so that their refugee families could gain crucial work experience and qualifications. The event saw over 2000 people from across communities come to Firstsite over two days, raised £4,000 for CRA and enabled two refugees to gain part-time employment.

Maria Wilby, Colchester Refugee Action: 'Fatima came to England about a year ago in one of the first waves of refugees to come to the UK. After the first day of the café, Fatima's mother called her after seeing her on Facebook and reading comments about her food. She said she was proud and that this was the first ray of sunshine in her life for a long time because her daughter had taught people about the beauty of Syria through her food.'

Artistic Quality

Our recent Gee Vaucher Exhibition received unprecedented levels of press coverage locally, nationally and internationally. This included one of Gee's artworks being reproduced as the Daily Mirror's cover image on the day of the US presidential election results. Gee was also interviewed on Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* and her image *Oh America* went viral on social media channels, being tweeted by global stars such as Rihanna. Equally, local press coverage was very strong, including a three-page spread in the Colchester Gazette about Gee's invitation to Refugee Action Colchester to host the Syrian pop-up café.

2.6 Our Assessment of changes that our organisation needs to make to continue to improve quality, and what we will do to bring about these changes

A Learning Organisation

Encouraging training, learning and support to create a professional and customer-focused staff team at all levels. This will include service excellence, unconscious bias and management training. In 2017 we will implement our first staff-training day.

Collaboration

Building collaboration into all levels of our creative planning and implementation with stakeholders and local arts entities, in order to share best practice and resources.

Community Engagement

Working proactively with communities to build our brand as a place for everyone; engaging with the local media to promote our work and image.

Audience Surveys

Continuously improving our capability for measuring visitor feedback, and feeding this into our evaluation processes.

Analytics

Learning how to better analyse on and off-line data as part of our approach to improving the quality of our work

Programme Advisory Group

Using this forum to gauge how we are performing against outcomes and KPIs we have established.

Proactive and focused Marketing

Exploiting use of digital marketing to increase audience reach and promote our brand. Improving audience numbers and diversity to contribute to a better visitor experience and income generation.

KPIs

Introducing KPIs to our main dashboard and continually reviewing these at Board and management levels to ensure we look at feedback honestly and mitigate risks properly. Communicating how we are doing to all staff, to contribute to a performance-focused organisation.

Building Improvements

The shop, café area at the front of the building and 15 Queen Street need investment to be sustainable for the long term and to provide an improved customer experience. We are applying for small-scale capital grant from ACE to make these changes.

2.7 Plans to support, produce and distribute creative content and experiences digitally

Our primary commitment to working to support artists to make and show work digitally is via our Auditorium. There is a potential of 2000 hours per year of presentation time outside of the time allotted to Curzon Cinema's contribution to our film programme. We will use these 2000 hours to:

Screen existing artistic film productions through our re-invigorated relationship with Film and Video Umbrella (FVU). When the auditorium is not screening commercial films or content connected to our Children and Young People / Schools programmes, we will screen a rolling programme of artists' films and film shorts on a monthly basis, curated in partnership with FVU.

Screen artistic, historical and/or commercial film content that connects directly with the National Curriculum. This will primarily be screened between 10am and 1pm, when School groups more frequently come in to Firstsite. Films will be selected in consultation with schools via our leadership of the Local Creative Education Partnership LCEP.

Commission x12 one-minute and five-minute artist films, to be screened immediately before each commercial film screened by Curzon Cinema. This equates to a potential of 240 screenings to over 12,000 viewers, assuming film attendance of 50 people per screening.

Through our Programme Advisory Group, the University of Essex and working closely with young artists in particular, we will investigate fully the impact of digital technologies on creative practices and exhibition making. This will help us to connect to Colchester's identity as a digital creative hub and to develop our theme of Digital and Innovation for 2019/20.

2.8 Working with independent artists by developing artistic talent and how this relates to the needs of artists in our area

ENAS, Colchester Art Society and emerging regional talent

We will deliver one prominent presentation per year highlighting the work of an up-coming artist from the region, achieved by working with Essex Network of Artists Studios (ENAS) and Colchester Art Society.

Commitments to local Talent

Every year we will feature at least one showcase of artists who live or have lived locally. This includes collaborative exhibitions such as Radical North Essex with Focal Point Gallery. Firstsite's contribution is to present an exhibition of the Artists of Great Barfield, curated with regionally based Curator Maeve Polkinhorn.

2.9 Offering time, space and resources to develop artistic or specialist practice

Once a year within our main exhibition programme we will develop a headline exhibition connected to the Annual Theme for the year. These will be guest curated with at least two exhibitions led by colleagues at the University of Essex as a direct extension of their research specialisms. A high profile artist and an industry partner will curate two exhibitions.

Confirmed Examples:

- *War, Art and Popular Culture*. Curated by Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller. 2018/19 Confirmed.

- *The History of the Pixel: From Mosaic to Minecraft*. Curated by a University of Essex Research Fellow and students at the University of Essex. 2019/20 Confirmed.
- *Art and Industry*: An exhibition exploring the impact of the artistic imagination in fashion, gaming, industrial design and architecture. Developed in partnership with the Creative Industries Federation. 2021/22 In discussion.

2.10 Commissioning new work and encouraging new collaboration

The size and innovative design of our building and its surrounding area present challenges and opportunities. We are working smartly with our partners to realise longer-duration new commissions, alongside shorter-term exhibition activity. Our visitor and stakeholder feedback tells us we need a balance of both to animate our large spaces with regular moments of new activity to attract a regular flow of visitors. We are programming:

An annual year-long 'Wunderkammer'

Objects responding to the four Annual Themes will be curated by artists and local groups working in partnership with Colchester & Ipswich Museum Services, as well as a range of 'hidden gem' local collections from across Essex (Malden Military Museum, Victor Batte-Lay Collection, Essex County Council Collection). This is to be presented as a semi-permanent display alongside our celebrated ancient Roman Mosaic embedded in our gallery floor.

GO! Essex.

Great Place Scheme application with ECC, University of Essex, Creative Colchester Board. A three-year programme of community focused activity leading to digital interventions in the public realm in conjunction with our year of 'Digital and Innovation' in 2019. This is a new strategic project across Essex, which Firstsite have been instrumental in drawing together. It will bring new investment to Firstsite, Cultural Partners and the University of Essex if successful.

John Ball Project. Subject to an ACE Ambition for Excellence application, this is a three-year project to celebrate the legacy of John Ball, who introduced the concept of equality to Western thought in the 1300s. It will include an international open call for artists to submit ideas for an artwork celebrating equality today, an exhibition at Firstsite of all the ideas submitted and eventually one commissioned artwork produced and displayed permanently outside Firstsite as part of the Gold Square development. With Mayor of Colchester, CBC, University of Essex, Bishop of Colchester, Colchester Cultural Partnership

2.11 Commitment to longer-term initiatives, such as mentoring, or creating accessible offer and an environment to support the development of diverse artistic practice

We have established the John Ball Project as our primary strand in this area outlined later in this proposal. We will also deliver a number of projects that specifically support individuals sharing the protected characteristics we have identified as a priority:

Annual Women's solo presentation

Arising from the Annual Theme of our 2018 programme, the 100th anniversary of the Women's right to vote, which was a direct result of World War I, and the keenness felt by women in Essex that they are misrepresented through such clichés stereotypes as the 'Essex Girl', we will present one solo presentation by a woman artist, either emerging or established, every year. Timed to coincide with 6th February each year, when Royal Assent was given to the Representation of the People Act in 1918.

Essex Cultural Diversity and Wysing Arts Centre Partnership

We will develop a new collaboration to present at least two solo presentations per year by an artist from one of the protected characteristic groups, providing valuable artistic development time and the opportunity to show in an internationally celebrated art centre.

The Britishness Project (dependent on Garfield Weston Foundation application)
Working with young people across North Essex in a variety of educational settings, we will collaborate to produce a set of works both authored by young people and curated by young people from national and local collections that give a high profile platform for young people's interpretations of British Values and Britishness. Potentially supported by Garfield Western Foundation (TBC).

Learning & Education

Children and Young People. We aim to reach at least 10% of children and young people across Essex over the funding period through direct visits and digital interactions. The programme is our primary method for positively influencing social mobility. By engaging children and young people from economically challenged backgrounds, we will help provide them with the skills and confidence to achieve success throughout their lives. Activities are outlined in full in Goal 5.

2.12 How we will aim to share our work internationally and attract audiences and work with artists around the world

New Frontiers. At least one major presentation per year by an artist from or invited to work in an international context, driven by our relationship with the Colchester Garrison and their work in West Africa and The Baltic States, and in partnership with The British Council. Working with Wysing Arts Centre, we will deliver a residency and exhibition project with one international artist per year, focusing on contemporary military conflict zones.

Europe's Most Ancient Towns Network (funding dependent). Over the course of the funding period we will take one body of work by an Essex-based artist or artists from our programme to Europe through this network of towns with which we are already associated.

ECVAN – Geographies of the East. Working with our regional partners, we will deliver this exchange and professional development project with European venues.

3. How Firstsite is responding to the Creative Case for Diversity

3.1 How our programme reflects the diversity of contemporary England

Three 'Golden Threads' run throughout our activity to ensure that the integrity of our values, vision and mission are reflected in artistic and cultural outcomes.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: making what we are doing relevant for a broad range of people who are reflective of the protected characteristic groups most relevant in our area.

Social Mobility: Ensuring difficult to reach audiences are engaged directly or indirectly; inspiring, motivating and making a difference to their learning, health and social wellbeing through creative endeavors.

Digital, experimentation and innovation: providing a platform for artists, young people and future innovators to encourage exploration of digital creativity; making potential contributions to the economic wellbeing of the region.

We have significantly changed the structure and style of our artistic programme to allow us to show a greater variety of artists and media over the course of each year. Our 'portfolio' approach plays to the strengths of our unique building, allowing us to show many types of work and practices simultaneously attracting local, national and international audiences.

3.2 How we make sure that diversity is an essential part of our programme activity

Through our open and collaborative working practices, we are committed to ensuring that at least 50% of our artistic content is created or curated by or involves members of the protected characteristic groups. We are particularly focusing on women, BAME groups and individuals from socio-economically deprived backgrounds.

Co-curated projects, University of Essex student collaborations and intern placements will also provide opportunities to engage with artists and cultural practitioners who can make a difference to our programme activity.

3.3 Our plans for supporting the development of artists and practitioners, and providing platforms for showing work from, and providing opportunities for, diverse artists practitioners and other organisations

We will show emerging talent alongside established names. We will show local and regional practitioners alongside artists from further afield. We will show 'traditional' art forms alongside experimental and new modes of production, long-term presentations alongside quick and high-turnover projects. This approach means a much greater level of opportunity for ideas, influences and productions from a greater range of people – and ultimately more reasons for more people to come to Firstsite. Within this range, we are committed to specific outputs by women artists, BAME artists and artists from socio-economically deprived backgrounds as outlined in Goal 1.

We have listened intently to our communities and stakeholders to shape the themes and subjects we will explore through our programme. We have deliberately sought subjects that we believe to be more universal, and which can be discussed from a diverse range of perspectives. For example, by focusing on Culture and Conflict in 2018 we can invite a variety of viewpoints on the impact of conflict through the many cultures of Colchester, including small but vital communities such as the Gurkhas, represented by the Colchester Nepalese Society. Other communities we are currently engaging with include the Chinese Society, African communities and Syrian refugees. All of whom can potentially use Firstsite as a platform.

3.4 Recruitment Selection and Involvement

We have an Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, and have completed an Equalities Impact Assessment, which includes our approach to recruitment and selection. We have a very experienced Diversity Advisor working for us pro bono. The Board Chair at Firstsite champions diversity, and we have a diversity champion within our core staff team.

Our collaborative networks heavily influence recruitment with representatives of members of the protected characteristics groups. For example, any new employment opportunity is highlighted through extensive community networks enabled through our strategic involvement with groups such as the LCEP, Creative Colchester Board, CCVS and Citizen's UK.

We are working with our Colchester Cultural Partners to understand best practice with regards to the practical side of improving our recruitment systems. For example, Colchester & Ipswich Museum Services have been sharing ideas and techniques for seeking applications for employment opportunities, including initiating conversations via phone or video apps, and asking for a range of qualifications or equivalent experience gained through employment.

Our involvement with members of the protected characteristic groups starts with open conversation, listening to what people are trying to achieve and gaining an understanding of how we can help as an organisation. From this we build small-scale projects to test new relationships and assess potential, while listening and developing further ideas. We are now in the process of developing a longer-term project driven by collaborations with groups that we see as stakeholders in Firstsite, which will carry across the grant period. Our activities with Colchester Refugee Action, Flipside and the Veteran's day are examples of how we have established involvement.

3.5 How we respond to challenges and barriers facing members of the protected characteristic groups in participating in and engaging with the arts and cultural sector

Our primary response to the various challenges facing members of the protected characteristic groups has been to establish the John Ball Project. The project is at its heart a public art work for Colchester (dependent on an Ambition for Excellence Award). Alongside exploring how we will commission this work in a way that is truly reflective of the impact of John Ball (who introduced equality to Western thought in the 1300s in Colchester), the partners are embarking on a process of uncovering the challenges people face in our region, and how the range of organisations involved in our partnership can address these challenges.

The John Ball Partnership is one of the most important ways (but not the only way) in which we are beginning to advocate for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion across Colchester, Essex and eventually the UK and internationally, and sharing best practice among colleagues and peers. The John Ball Group meets monthly to discuss the development of the project, and there are a small number of working groups that focus on specific aspects of delivery, such as the first John Ball Day in July 2017, which will be an opportunity for the Partners to present the full project and our plans.

3.6 Our plans to share best practice and continued learning around diversity to promote change in the arts and cultural sector

Firstsite's Board, Director and Diversity Advisor are keen to use the gallery as a platform to share best practice in the arts, and will look for support to run an annual event for arts leaders, this may start with funds from the +Tate network in 2017/18. This will directly connect with the work of the John Ball Project group.

3.7 How we will collect evidence, including review and feedback from peers, audiences and other stakeholders, that demonstrates our contribution to the creative case for diversity

We have many mechanisms for collecting data at Firstsite, including our online enterprise systems, analysis of social media through our communications partners, proactive promotion of questionnaires and through community consultation and audience engagement.

The data provides important information about our audiences and their behaviours, in order to inform our priorities and identify where and when we create new content, as well as how to better distribute our existing content to reach more people, with a view to cross-pollinating our audiences between assets such as the auditorium, café and exhibitions. This is a cost-effective approach, which responds to our learning and arises from transition, and ensures we maximise the different parts of our building and programme to appeal to different groups, exposing them to new content, as well as that which they may be more familiar with.

Data is analysed by our in-house teams, Programme Advisory Group and marketing and communication partners, creating a continuing loop of gathering, analysing and adapting in response to new insight.

3.8 How we will advocate for the creative case for diversity and promote best practice locally and internationally

We intend to achieve this through three pieces of work:

- our annual event, which will be promoted widely and
- through our John Ball art commission (subject to funding).
- Through the continued work of the John Ball Group to identify opportunities and share progress on diversity and inclusion across all the committed parties.

3.9 Volunteers.

In 2016 we established a brand-new volunteer scheme, which has met with considerable success in its infancy. We have attracted over 70 volunteers since June 2016, when the scheme was introduced. We have monitored the participants and analysed their demographic reach to ensure they are in line with our region, and we are close to matching the local picture. We have a range of ages from 18 to 65, and a strong mix of nationalities and ethnic

backgrounds. This has been achieved with a relatively light touch when publicising the programme.

In 2017/18 we are starting a more focused plan to bring up our numbers directly in line with national figures for the protected characteristic groups, or as close as possible, given our local context. We will do this a small amount of targeted advertising and via our extensive community links.

Over the course of the grant period we aim to increase our pool of volunteers to 200 and to have established ways for volunteers to contribute to Firstsite beyond care for the galleries. We plan to have volunteers spending 50% of their time in a specialist area of their choice (events, marketing, finance, programming, retail or customer care) and 50% of their time in the galleries interacting with our visitors and the team.

4. GOAL 2 - Everyone has the opportunity to be involved in and be inspired by the arts.

4.1 How we show that there is demand for our work from our audiences

Our audience attendance has remained strong over the last two financial years, since moving through transition. We achieved 125,000 in 2015/16, and we are on track to achieve 100-105,000 in 2016/17. This is despite considerable change within the organisation over this period and is at least a 25% increase on our achievements prior to transition. This has been achieved by programming inclusive content such as an open submission exhibition in 2015 and community engagement activity through our Public Programmes in 2016/17, strategies we will continue across the funding period.

4.4 Our digital and on-line channels show the following all of which indicate steady growth over the last 12 months:

Social Channels:

Facebook: 3689 likes (growing by 100 per month).
Instagram: 3142 followers
Twitter: 10467 followers

Direct Channels:

Newsletter: 11309 subscribers
Emails Delivered: 305,619
Emails Opened: 79,774

Website - Since November 9th:

Page Impressions: 31691
Unique Users: 16764
Sessions: 24331
Av. dwell time: 1 minute 10 seconds

4.5 We use social as part of the comms approach to generate large reach for our messaging. Since the launch of our current campaign in November 2016, total marketing impressions have been 11,023,323 of which social impressions contributed 189,692. We are now running a series of cost-effective tests on different social impressions growth providers including paid for reach. Our aim over the funding period is to significantly increase reach and salience with new audiences and deepen commitment and value with existing visitors.

We have established a new catchment area through Audience Finder, based on a 45-minute drive time from Firstsite. Using data reflecting this catchment, we have a clear sense of our current performance and where to focus next to achieve the numbers we are aiming for over the grant period.

4.6 All our activity will be driven through two strands

- Our inclusive programme as mentioned above and how we go about sharing this with our current and new target audiences
- Creating a stronger Firstsite brand salience with existing and new audiences of the 17/18 and 18/19 financial years

4.7 Our successes are strongest with audiences in the 45+ age range, and we are dominated by the 'Dormitory Dependables' segmentation. Our priorities, when attracting substantial new audiences over the grant period, are:

- Children and young people,
- The local and very diverse student population (which does not appear strongly in the 45-minute catchment, but does appear when examining a closer 15-minute range) and with
- 'Home & Heritage' and 'Trips and Treats' segmentations.

These priorities are reflected in our artistic and commercial programming activities outlined in Goal 1 our developing plans for Children and young people outlined in Goal 5 and in plans outlined below relating to communications, marketing and specific audience engagement activity to be carried out over the grant period.

4.8 Where we have tested our new approach – through our auditorium, artistic programme and café activities – we have achieved overwhelmingly positive results. For example, showing 'live' screenings (RSC, Bolshoi Ballet, the Met and the National Theatre) and recently released films draws in high levels of people from our target groups, programming bespoke activity for young people in the artistic programme, such as our recent 'Flipside' festival, and informing people through relevant communications channels equally helps to generate considerable and immediate success. Lastly, an inclusive approach through commercial activities – for example, the Syrian pop-up café – have generated excellent responses as a result of the positive social capital generated as well as financial capital. This 'minimum viable product' model allows us to test in a low-risk environment before scaling with careful investment.

4.9 Our plans for keeping current audiences and developing new ones

We are responding to the demands of our existing audiences – mostly comprising Experience Seekers, Dormitory Dependables, Commuterland Culturebuffs, Trips & Treats and Home & Heritage – by continuing to present high levels of 'traditional' art forms alongside newer and more experimental forms, and which we know appeal.

The key difference in our new approach is in the consistent combination of the two at any given moment in the programme. We are also continuing to produce tried and tested methods of communicating with these audiences, such as our printed what's-on guide, regular e-bulletins and an improved website.

To attract new audiences we have developed new strands of activity that we know will appeal because of our recent small-scale tests. We will continue our cost effective research into new areas with representatives from 'Trips and Treats' and 'Heydays', Facebook Families' and 'Up Our Street' segmentations over 2017/18, and will feed results into our forthcoming programmes of activity.

4.10 How we will increase the number and range of people who have the opportunity to experience and participate in high quality art and culture

Over and above our programme-driven activity, we are progressing plans to increase the salience of Firstsite's brand with all our priority audiences, both existing and new. This work will increase the likelihood of visitors choosing Firstsite as a default destination in which to spend their time and disposable income. This will be achieved by continuing our work in 2017/18 to create a clearer and more focused audience engagement plan through our Innovation and Enterprise Group and communications partners. This will include, where impactful, bespoke activity for specific audiences (in response to low cost one-to-one

consultation between the team and representatives of target groups) and cost effective, tailored means of communicating our existing offer – for example, with our nearby student audiences.

4.11 Our plans for touring and distributing our work and how we make the most of the impact of our work has.

Our approach to touring and distributing our work is to keep things practical and impactful, and to focus on sharing better our existing content, as opposed to creating new content for the purposes of distribution. For example, this will include making low-cost, bite-sized films about our programme (artist interviews, guest tours, etc.) for social media. We will also punctuate our building with prompts for our visitors to share content they are experiencing there and then.

We are developing a number of touring initiatives to take material from our gallery and film programme to venues across Essex (potentially via initiatives such as the Community Rail Network, which connects Colchester via a number of small towns to Clacton-on-Sea, one of the most socio-economically deprived areas of England), as well as nationally and internationally, as noted in Goal 1. We are also working with others organisations to better share content created in other regions as a low-cost means of bringing high quality content to Firstsite.

Where we commission new work, such as our programme of solo presentations by women, we aim to commission the kind of seminal works that will be shown repeatedly across an artist's career. Through our auditorium – one of our most prized assets – we also aim to facilitate the continued screening of the wealth of existing artists' moving image work in the UK. Through our Wunderkammer project we are supporting the Colchester and Ipswich Museums Services so that valuable unseen exhibits can be experienced by new audiences in surprising ways.

4.12 How we will work to make sure that currently people who are least engaged in the arts are able to experience our work.

At Firstsite we currently score well in two of the less engaged segmentations – Home & Heritage and Trips & Treats – due in part to the high density of these groups in our catchment area. We are approaching other less engaged groups, such as Heydays, Facebook Families and Up Our Street, through our brand salience work and also by providing specific content that has been tested first on a small, low-cost scale. One of our most interesting findings recently resulted from the Veterans' Day we delivered in collaboration with the Mayor of Colchester. We hosted a veterans' lunch, after which the Turner Prize-winning artist Jeremy Deller talked about his artwork commissioned as part of the commemorations for the 100th anniversary of WWI. By putting on an event dedicated to a small group of people who fall firmly in the Heydays segmentation, we also attracted their families and supporters, many of whom fall into the Up Our Street segmentation. In response, we are implementing plans to build on this experience, particularly through our 'Conflict and Culture' programme in 2018.

Our auditorium is, again, one of our key assets in engaging less inclined audiences. We are commencing a new partnership with Curzon Cinemas, who will run our mainstream film programme from February 2017 onwards. We know from our own evidence and evidence gathered by Curzon and Audience Finder that many people who frequently enjoy film and cinema can be identified in the harder-to-reach categories. By boosting our film programming activities over the funding period, we are building a familiarity with the building and the rest of our programmes, which these audiences will connect with as a consequence of using the auditorium.

4.13 Our target audiences and the types of people our activity will be likely to reach.

Our target audiences, in terms of addressing the least engaged of the Audience Finder segmentations, are Facebook Families, Up Our Street, and Heydays. We will reach them by working with our special collaborative partners, and in particular through our links with the Garrison and our 2018 programme.

We will follow our listening and interpreting approach to gauge need, and translate this into small packages of bespoke activity linked through our broader programme. We will also gain a better understanding of how to show the relevance of our existing planned activity by taking content to specific groups, and finding better, cost-effective ways to communicate content at the gallery – for example through digital platforms for Facebook Families.

4.14 How we will distribute our planned programme of art and culture digitally, with a focus on captured and/or cultural learning content.

We plan to distribute our planned programme by creating content specific to our online and social media channels. We have recently employed a part-time Marketing Coordinator to work alongside our communications partner. One of the primary functions of the in-house role is to look for means to create new content in-house that can be shared digitally.

This will include working with local digital influencers and bloggers to create low expense material – for example short films and interviews with exhibiting artists – which can be shared via social media. The post holder will also be working closely with our Young Art Kommunity to create digital spikes of online activity relating to our in-house content.

Our communications partner are developing our digital platforms and have completed extensive research recently into the impact of social media and digital platforms with specific audiences and target groups. This information is being folded into an element of our audience engagement plan specific to digital activities produced in 2017/18.

We anticipate that one of the functions of our Learning and Education activity, via our leadership of the LCEP, will be to focus on connecting life and activity in the gallery with a much greater on-line community in consultation with teachers and education specialists. This will include capturing talks and events and ensuring they are easily accessible on our website, creating downloadable materials for schools and teachers, and digital tours of exhibitions for visitors unable to come in person.

Our work with Colchester & Ipswich Museums Services, through the Wunderkammer project, will also lead to new activity in this area, enabling communities to contribute their own stories about specific objects via digital platforms in the gallery and online.

4.15 Any major current or planned development in the use of technologies to improve marketing, sales or customers feedback and experience

We continue to work with the Audience Agency to develop our visitor survey. We believe that the data collected by this technique will, when analysed for consumer insight, provide us with the tools to achieve more effective marketing, and thereby increase engagement while also providing us with visitor experience measures.

We have introduced Electronic Point-of-Sale systems across retail, Food & Drink and Cinema. This enables us to gather much more detailed insight into our customer's behavior and interests. This information is reviewed by the core Staff as well as at our Innovation & Enterprise committee, during which we scrutinise all commercial activity, how this links to the programme and how we continually drive footfall and income generation.

Our new partnership with Curzon Cinemas gives us access to a wealth of film presentation, marketing and analysis expertise gleaned from Curzon's network of cinemas across the UK.

As part of our collaboration with the University of Essex, we are looking into better ways to capture data about children and young people who are by nature put off by our more traditional survey activities.

4.16 How we will make the most of opportunities to increase the depth and quality of experience of people accessing our collections

Our ongoing collaboration with the University of Essex is generating new projects in this area for the grant period. This includes a project to introduce V-touch (virtual touch) gloves in certain exhibitions, funded through a University Research grant. The gloves will enable visually impaired visitors to 'feel' works remotely and also for non-disabled visitors to have increased access to specific objects which cannot be touched directly.

4.17 Our approach to collecting information about our current and potential audiences

At Firstsite, data and insight collection and analysis is now a year-round activity facilitated through our work with Audience Finder, our improved online activity our regular Board level and working group scrutiny and our frequent 1:2:1 conversations with specific communities and audience segmentations. In 2017 we will produce, as part of our revised Business Plan, a new Audience Development Plan, which will connect all our planned programme and commercial activity through a comprehensive set of works. We are also working closely with the Colchester Cultural Partnership and the University of Essex to better understand the collection of data across Colchester. We anticipate new work in this area over the funding period which give greater insight to inform all of our activities to create a richer and more connected offer.

4.18 Our approach to audience development for arts and culture as a whole and for developing shared approaches to capturing, sharing and reporting audience data

Integral to this plan will be how we work in partnership with the other key cultural organisations in Colchester – the Museums Services, Mercury Theatre and Colchester Arts Centre, as well as businesses in the town, such as Fenwick and Greyfriars Hotel, who have similar vested interests in attracting and keeping tourists in Colchester for longer and providing a rich commercial, retail and cultural environment. We have already together identified scope for a combined Audience Development plan, which would analyse audience overlap between venues and establish a number of activities – for example, a Colchester Culture Magazine / Guide – which could create a sense of connectivity and greater opportunities for visitors.

We are developing a number of initial, small-scale projects to test how audiences might be directly shared by collaborating in each other's content. For example, to support CIMS's move to a new storage venue and to broaden the access available to their collections, we have developed the Wunderkammer. We will also be piloting collaborative projects with Colchester Art Centre as part of our Gold Square Initiative and Go! Essex to animate the external spaces around the gallery during the development of the site immediately adjacent to us.

These projects, although relatively small in scale, will reveal new information about how audiences view and use our individual organisations, and how they can be strengthened over a longer period of time by working together better.

On an operational level, we are also looking into mechanisms through which we can share data about our audiences. This may come through box office mechanisms or via Audience Finder. This is connected to our establishing joint marketing initiatives, and will provide valuable insight into communication channel effectiveness for different audiences and cultural formats.

5. GOAL 5 - Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the Arts.

5.1 Our overall understanding and approach

Firstsite is committed to working with the Essex Children and Young Peoples Partnership to ensure that our resources have a positive impact on the priorities identified. We are leading the creation of the Local Cultural Educational Partnership (LCEP) to strengthen our commitment further. We want our resources to be seen as community assets that can be mobilised to benefit the most vulnerable and hard-to-reach people.

There are 296,000 children and young people in Essex – 21% of the population. 14.7 % of these live in poverty and 8.5% are from minority and ethnic groups.

Firstsite is a place where we can support the development of Children and Young People to improve their self-esteem, motivation and resilience through interaction with art and culture. We will use the impact framework created by the Impetus Trust to measure the difference we make to the lives of young people and to provide independent evaluation to support future funding applications to Trusts and Foundations. We will launch a charter for children and young people as part of our New YAK (Young Art Kommunity) – to be developed over the course of 2017/18.

Our trustees and Board and core staff are adamant that we make a difference – so much so that we have co-opted and are fully supporting the development of a young person (aged 18) on to our Trustee Board and Programme Advisory Group. They will act as an Ambassador for this target group. Firstsite want to demonstrate a genuine commitment to children and young people at every level of the gallery's activities. We will also involve, parents, guardians, carers and teachers in our collaborations and when curating learning activity for this target group.

We have arranged the programme around one major thematic project – The Britishness Project – for which we are seeking funding from the Garfield Weston Foundation in 2017/18 and into 2018/19. If successful, we intend to extend this project over the remainder of the NPO Grant period. This will enable us to engage in detail with one major curriculum topic that we know from existing relationships with teachers is particularly relevant in our area, namely Citizenship and British Values.

Around this spine of activity we are generating a second tier of smaller-scale regular workshops and drop-in activities, connected to our four Annual Themes and to assets such as the Wunderkammer. These will be designed to link with work being delivered by our other Cultural Partners in Colchester as a holistic offer, which will attract a greater level of interaction with schools, teachers, families and ultimately children and young people.

5.2 How we will include the Quality Principles across the programme

Quality Principle: Striving for excellence and innovation, being authentic and ensuring a positive and inclusive experience.

The Britishness Project (dependent on a Garfield Weston Foundation application). This is one of our 'comet-shaped' projects, designed to generate community engagement and leading to an exhibition outcome in our main on-site programme.

We will collaborate with children and young people in a range of educational settings across Essex, where cultural provision is low and communities and families show a lower than regional tendency to engage with arts and cultural activities.

We will identify ten schools in locations that provide a broad cross-section of cultural provision in the county. We will place artists in residence at the schools, to develop work made by students responding to themes of Citizenship and British Values. These works will be developed with a view to being presented at Firstsite later in the project as an exhibition outcome in the exhibitions programme.

It is assumed at this stage that the artists to be placed in schools will be from a pool developed through the continuation of YAK. This will enable further professional development for YAK membership, a channel for recruiting new members to the group and a mentoring opportunity with artists close to the age of school pupils.

Alongside developing their own work to be presented, students will also be invited to curate works from local and national collections, which will be included in presentations at Firstsite alongside their own work. For example, one school (or a collaboration of schools) will curate the Wunderkammer for 2018 to co-inside with our year of activity commemorating the 100th anniversary of the World War I.

The participating schools will then be invited, as part of forming the overall presentation of works and curated content, to devise a programme of public engagement activity for Firstsite. This will contribute to the authenticity and inclusive nature of the experience.

In operating a project of this nature, we are creating innovative firsthand ways for children and young people to take on the role of artist and curator, and to make an entire section of content in our programme. They will be directly responsible, with the support of Firstsite staff and YAK, for a CYP takeover of the galleries along similar lines to Flipside 2016.

Quality Principle: Being Exciting, Inspiring and Engaging

Weekend drop-in activities Designed by and for children and young people to respond to specific content in our four Annual Themes, and focused on directly engaging existing audiences as well as attracting new visitors from targeted segmentations outlined in Goal 2. We aim to develop YAK to the point where members can be commissioned to design a series of free daily or weekend drop-in activities, along similar lines to Firstsite's recent Warhol 'Print Factory' (6000 participants) and Gee Vaucher's Community Collage, which has generated over 300 collages made by the public in response to themes of family and community.

The activities will take place in different parts of the building and will be designed to create evidence that participants have gained experience of the Impetus Trust impact framework capabilities. To design the projects, YAK will work with both the Learning & Education Team at Firstsite, as well as our communications partner. They will take part in and help conduct a set of conversations, which will enable Firstsite to understand better the needs and interests of the audience segmentations we currently struggle to engage – in particular Facebook Families and Up Our Street.

Quality Principal: Actively involving children and young people and enabling personal progression.

YAK will build on our successful experience of working with children and young people through Flipside, providing the opportunity to involve a wider range of young people and create further momentum. We will create a charter on how to engage this target group and make a difference to their lives. We will use the Impetus Trusts framework to consistently measure the impact we are making on the lives of young people to support their wellbeing and progression.

Quality Principle: Developing belonging and ownership

Involvement in the development of YAK and our Children and Young People's Charter will be the principle mechanisms we use to involve the public and build a genuine sense of ownership.

More recently we co-opted 18-year-old Charlotte Winters a member of YAK on to our Trustee Board as a champion for young people. Insights from her involvement in Circuit and her personal experience of the vulnerability of children and young people are informing the way we think and how we work with this target group. To enable Charlotte to contribute effectively she has been provided with a Board Buddy, who takes her through papers, particularly those Charlotte is interested in and those that concern the areas she is championing. She is receiving training and coaching on the role of trustees and related issues.

In return, Charlotte is using her recent experience in YAK to directly improve the shape and direction of our Artistic and Learning activity. Charlotte has directly informed Goal 5 and will play a lead role in creating our Charter for children and young people.

5.3 How we identify and meet the demands of different audiences of children and young people, including those who are less engaged, have protected characteristics, are less advantaged and are under the age of five years old.

We will seek to share data from Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council and cross-reference this with the detailed information provided in the Essex Children and Young People's Strategy. Currently there are no clear links on how cultural organisations, and particularly arts organisations, can contribute to some of the key priorities identified.

In terms of children under the age of five years old, we will continue to make provision for parents, babies and toddlers through bespoke activities in different parts of our building. This includes arts classes, specific activities at exhibitions and parent-toddler sessions in our auditorium screenings.

5.4 How we will improve our collection of data about children and young people with protected characteristics (to include socio-economic background)

YAK will work with Firstsite's communications partner in 2017 and 2018 to help shape how we collect and analyse data related to children and young people. We know from our audience survey work that children and young people are put off by our surveys – both the format and the rationale for why they are important – they say 'it looks like homework'. New YAK will work with our communications partner and students from the University of Essex to develop new mechanisms to generate vital information that will sit alongside our Audience Finder research.

We obtain data from the HM National Office of Statistics on the demographic profile of our region in order to analyse families and their socio-economic situations to build a stronger understanding and profile of where and how we can target children and young people with protected characteristics.

5.5 How we will work with partners who can help us reach targeted groups

Through our four Annual Themes we will be able to create opportunities for conversations with different audiences of children and young people – as we did with Syrian young people through the successful pop-up café we hosted in December 2016.

A key priority for this programme will be to increase the diversity of those taking part. In 2017/18 we will test a number of strategies to achieve this:

- Through the LCEP develop a network of Community Ambassadors from the most deprived wards of Colchester and the surrounding boroughs to engage with families,
- Running taster workshops in community venues in the most deprived wards,
- Offering vouchers to encourage first-time attendance at workshops,
- Marketing workshops to pupils on schools' visits – perhaps through vouchers.

Working with YAK we will build on the success of recent partnerships – for example, the Barnardo's Children's Centre partnership workshops for teenage parents and their babies from the Greenstead and St Anne's areas of Colchester and Essex Social Services/Care Leavers Project, which produced work for the Flipside Festival.

Leading on the LCEP will enable us to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones to form a combined offer across varying art forms. We are working with the University of Essex on the initial scoping document. This is being written and presented by University students in the Social Sciences department, who will collate current activity and make recommendations for specific projects that the LCEP will work together to deliver.

We will also work in partnership to develop off-site projects that reach children and young people with protected characteristics. For example, the E-CVAN, New Geographies of the East project, will create site-specific works of art in locations chosen by communities and Go! Essex (subject to a Great Places funding application) and culminate in digital installations in public spaces in Colchester, developed by digital artists working with communities.

The engagement of children and young people in these projects may be in the context of the wider community. These projects will generally focus on communities experiencing high levels of deprivation. They will always link back to the gallery and its exhibition programme in order to encourage attendance.

5.6 How we will demonstrate a commitment to the broader educational challenge, advocating and supporting arts and cultural provision in schools through either senior leadership becoming school governors, or by permitting staff time to undertake duties as school governors

Our Trustee Board chair is a former founder of 30 city academies and along with the Director, continues to champion involvement in schools by staff, volunteers and trustees. Via our leadership of the LCEP We will look positively to such activities as development for the individual member of staff, as well as helping to develop a stronger understanding and relationships with parents, teachers and carers.

5.7 How we are working in and how we will make progress in strategic partnerships by either taking a central role, being actively involved and taking a lead in cultural education partnerships

Colchester does not currently have a Local Cultural Education Partnership (LCEP). Firstsite has discussed this with the other main NPO organisations and arts entities in the area, and it is agreed that we will take a strategic lead in the development of Colchester's first LCEP. We will seek to engage neighbouring Essex boroughs of Tendring, Braintree and Maldon.

We will work in partnership with ROH Bridge and the Creative Colchester Board to implement the LCEP. Through our new Learning & Education Co-ordinator role (to be established in 2017/18), we will deliver a programme of activities which help us coordinate data across the cultural sector, create a connected response to the Education Challenge and identify key pieces of work that will better enable Firstsite and the Cultural Partners of Colchester to generate their own in-house activities.

The LCEP in partnership with Creative Colchester Board plan to undertake work that will include:

- Mapping current provision of all cultural Learning and Education in Colchester (and potentially a broader area than this later in the grant period).
- Mapping data collection across all cultural partners, analysing what systems are in place, what reports are available, where the gaps are in this information
- Identifying projects through which the LCEP can engage better with schools, families and children and young people – for example, creating a unified teachers' forum across all cultural organisations, at which programmed activity for a full year is outlined to a larger group of schools, with a focus on diversity and the protected characteristics.
- Creating a better networked cross-sector group of officers at delivery level who are informed by the above work to create dedicated in-house activities that meet the needs of teachers, schools, families and children and young people across Colchester and surrounding wards.

During 2017/18 Firstsite will produce a set of recommendations and project-based objectives connected to our business plan via the LCEP.

5.8 How we plan to contribute to at least two of the three priorities for goal five:

Arts Mark: Through developing the LCEP, we will support schools in Colchester in developing Arts Mark. We will also support other schools in North Essex in achieving Arts Mark, focusing on schools with significant numbers of pupils in receipt of free school meals. Recognising the challenges schools face in achieving Arts Mark, we will offer in-depth support to one school each year.

Arts Award: We are an Arts Award Centre and we continue to work with Signals Media (the other Arts Award Centre) to support children and young people in achieving Arts Award. The achievement of Arts Award will be embedded in future projects, including summer schools, a tour of the New YAK programme and off-site community based projects. Each year we will support 15 young people in achieving Engage and Discover Awards, two in achieving Bronze Award, two in achieving Silver Award and one in achieving Gold award.

Digital: Go! Essex and New YAK. Assuming a successful Great Place Scheme application in collaboration with Essex County Council, Firstsite will create a social and creative forum for young artists in the region, working with digital media. We will also make available exhibition opportunities for young artists at Firstsite and locally, and devise open-platform opportunities for artists and the wider public to engage with Firstsite's existing programme throughout the grant period.

The new forum proposed – New YAK/Digital (working title) – will become part of Firstsite's rebranding of YAK to New YAK and provide opportunities for young artists to develop and share new skills, create experimental new work and participate in group critique. This will also inform thinking and research for the planned thematic structure of 2019 programme 'Digital and Innovation'.

6. How we are planning to lead and manage our proposed programme of work.

6.1 Risks and mitigation.

Our Finance and Risk Committee includes three qualified accountants. They work closely with our Programme Advisory Board and Director to ensure that we have a budget, and a marketing and project plan for each major activity. This, combined with our strategic and operational risk registers, which are reviewed monthly and our close performance management of individual members of staff, mitigates risks we might otherwise experience.

Key risks include:

Poor financial management. Mitigated by: transparent communication and increased scrutiny between Firstsite Senior Management, Trustee Board and Key Stakeholders; improved Management Accounts and clear accompanying narrative, more regular meetings between Firstsite SMT and stakeholders between board meetings.

Over-ambitious Commercial and Trusts and Foundations income generation targets. Mitigated by: setting very prudent targets in consultation with stakeholders; employing sufficient and qualified staff to monitor and meet these targets through strategic bids and carefully planned commercial activity; working in partnership with experienced partners such as Curzon Cinemas and We Walk The Line to deliver high-quality programming of key commercial assets such as our café and auditorium.

A programme that fails to engage immediate local and regional audiences. Mitigated by: intensive community and stakeholder engagement and listening; employment of highly skilled and innovative senior management staff with a track record for artistic quality and high levels of community engagement; structuring a programme team that allows for integrated and shared thinking around programme development; developing general Firstsite brand salience with communications partners.

6.2 Suitability of our Management Structure and governance arrangements

Firstsite has a core team of twenty staff led by the Director, who is supported by five senior managers with an overview of programme, development, building, commercial and finance. The core team is supplemented with placements from the University of Essex and Colchester Institute, who work across all areas of the operations of Firstsite. We have a newly established and growing pool of 70 volunteers, who support all aspects of delivery at Firstsite, with a core focus on front-of-house support.

The senior management team meets fortnightly to ensure smooth operational management. The core operational team meets weekly to communicate their work across departments. All staff receive performance management reviews. Staff receive weekly bulletins to ensure effective communication.

The Board meets five times a year with a structured agenda. Dates have been set for the next three years, and a rolling forward planner ensures that we are leading strategically and managing performance of KPIs effectively. A professional company secretary has been appointed as a trustee to ensure the highest levels of probity.

6.3 Recruitment and Performance management

All senior management posts and professional roles are advertised through open competition using a professional agency. A high priority has been given to recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse workforce. The importance of this is reflected by the fact that our Board Chair is the Diversity Champion for Firstsite. Trustees are appraised annually through informal meetings with the Chair.

Effective Decision-making: Strategic planning and detailed operational management plans that uses data and financial information (with an open and challenging culture) continues to contribute to effective decision making at board and management levels. We have put in place new systems to record income and have implemented research to better understand our audiences, including diverse communities, and to help us to make better decisions and investment choices.

Plans are reviewed annually and amended in light of learning and experience. Committees and working groups feed in their recommendations, particularly our Innovation and Enterprise Group, which is looking at new ways of working. All trustees are provided with a thorough induction programme and receive training on the role of trustees, and in particular their roles and responsibilities concerning financial management.

Effective Self Evaluation: Our work is evaluated at several levels. At a strategic level the Board reviews performance at every meeting against a dashboard with KPIs, in addition to the Risk Register. All policies and plans are reviewed annually to ensure compliance with legislative changes and best practice. The Director reviews each major programme, including key exhibitions, the talks programme and special projects. This is in turn reported back to the Board. While reviewing this feedback, the Board look at footfall achieved, community engagement and income generation achieved as well as publicity.

6.4 Partnerships: Firstsite want to collaborate as widely as possible with prospective partners. We have several layers of partnerships.

- Funders, including: ACE; local authorities; major Trusts and Foundations
- Arts and cultural organisations, including: Colchester Arts Centre; the Mercury; The Creative Arts Alliance and Minorities
- Community organisations, including: African Families in the UK; Chinese Society and Refugee Action Colchester.
- Major entities within the Borough and region: The Garrison; NHS Trust; Essex University; Schools and Youth Organisations.
- Artists based in the region and those relevant to our programme.
- Commercial partnerships to generate income: We have a partnership with Curzon Cinemas to market and programme our mainstream films. A partnership with We Walk The Line, a DWP backed social enterprise, to run our front-of-house café.

The limited time and structure of the organisation means that we have to be clear on the purpose of our partnerships and collaboration and what we are trying to achieve. This helps us to prioritise our time and investment in people and resources, ensuring those we pursue are effective and make a difference. We Walk The Line helps us commercially, but it is also aimed at providing opportunities for less socially mobile staff.

6.5 Planning for Sustainability.

Firstsite developed very detailed financial and operational plans as part of the recovery process referred to as 'our transition'. We have continued to work in this way, building on the lessons learnt. Monthly management accounts and quarterly financial reporting in a clear and transparent format has helped trustees and staff to understand more clearly how well we are doing, and any under-performance that needs to be addressed. It is also helping us make better decisions about investment and priorities for generating income that contributes to our sustainability. We have a very commercial and business-like Board supported by our Innovation and Enterprise Working Group.

Firstsite has established a strong Senior Management Team that shares responsibility for close financial management, led by the Director and Director of Finance along with clear and achievable income generation targets which are shared across different sections of the team. This includes targets for income from Trusts and Foundations led by the Director and co-ordinated by the Development Manager. Firstsite has already achieved a modest level of success in 2016/17 which will feed in to our 2017/18 targets. This work is planned as far in advance as possible, supported by clear artistic programme plans.

6.6 Board Structure and diversity

Following an audit of skills in September 2015, we have recruited through open competition a very diverse Board (13 people in total, including our President who is a co-opted member), which includes: three trustees from BAME communities, one representing the LGBT community and one young person aged 18. We have seven male and six female trustees. Three members of the Board have a disability.

The main trustee Board includes co-opted elected members from Colchester Borough Council and Essex County Council. Their officers and our ACE Liaison Officer attend Board meetings.

Committees and Boards:

Finance and Risk Committee: Meets monthly attended by the Director and Finance Director. Chaired by a qualified accountant. Minutes and action notes are shared with the Board.

Nominations Committee: Chaired by Board Chair and includes two other trustees with HR experience and qualifications. Meets as required and minutes shared with the Board.

Programme Advisory Group: Chaired by a trustee, includes four trustees and external advisers, including a diversity and inclusion consultant and a member of our Young Art Kommunity.

Innovation and Enterprise Group: Chaired by Board Chair, includes Chair of Finance, three other trustees and three external business advisers. Meets every six weeks to identify income generation and business opportunities to leverage our resources.

Audience Engagement Group: Chaired by a trustee, the group includes three other trustees and our external professional communications/marketing advisers. Community representatives attend.

6.7 Mission and Board skills:

Our mission is to inspire people through innovative art and culture – contributing to our region's wellbeing, learning and economy.

Summary of the key Skills and experience represented by our Board:

Dr Noorzaman Rashid (Chair) MBA, BA (Hons)

MD Strategies for Change. Board Chair of several national charities. Management consultant with turnaround experience, commercial income generation, marketing, fundraising, diversity and inclusion policy. Also a former Trustee of NYO GB and English Touring Opera.

Bob Surman FCA

Director Mightdo Business consultancy. Previously a partner with Kingston Smith LLP. Over 20 years board level finance experience supporting blue-chip clients.

Julia Obasa BA (Hons) Business, MA International Finance

Entrepreneur and owner of several small businesses in Colchester. Good experience of finance and marketing to establish and support small businesses and community enterprises. Heavily involved with local communities.

Martin Blackburn, FCA, CIPD

A qualified Accountant and HR Director of KPMG, one of the largest professional services firms in the UK. Significant experience in organisation development and business transformation. Playwright and strong involvement in performing arts.

Roger Hirst FCA

Police Commissioner for Essex County. Former Cabinet Member Essex CC. Over 30 years as a financial analyst. Significant experience in governance, performance management, local and regional politics.

Helen Organ BA (Hons) Solicitor

Company Secretary and Legal Counsel at Sue Ryder, a national charity. Over 20 years experience and expertise in commercial and company law.

Ranil Perera, MA (cantab), MSc, MBA, ACIB, FISI, FIMC

Financial Services and risk expert, has worked for the Financial Services Authority, Citi Bank, BBC and Barclays. Involvement in housing and regeneration investment advice.

Nicky Johnston PGCE

Former Head of Art and Design at Colchester Sixth Form College. Significant knowledge of Learning and Education, and experience in staff engagement issues. Wide range of knowledge of the arts.

Jayne Knowles BA (Hons), MA

Associate Dean Wimbledon College of Arts (University of the Arts London). Significant experience and knowledge of arts education and management. Practicing local artist.

Guy Armitage MA Artificial Intelligence

Founder of Zealous, a London based online creative network, enabling creative talent to be sourced through open calls. He previously founded Bright-Creations a web design and development agency in Egypt, and was in charge of the FTSE quarterly review for the London Stock Exchange. Has a Masters in Artificial Intelligence (1:1) from King's College London and has been featured on the world-changing potential of creativity at TEDx and in Forbes. Winner of the Tate Digital Art Hackathon with digital artwork *echo*.

CLLR Tim Young

Cabinet Member of Colchester Borough Council's Coalition Administration. Chair of Colne Housing and NED of an NHS Trust. Significant experience in culture, the arts, regeneration and governance issues.

Charlotte Winter

Student and practicing young artist, co-opted to represent the views of younger people and especially those in and emerging from care.

Summary of the key skills and experience reflected by our senior management team:

Sally Shaw MA, BA (Hons) – Director
MA Curating at Goldsmiths College of Art & Design, BA (Hons) Public Art & Design at Chelsea College of Art and Design. Oxford Cultural Leaders 2015. Previously Head of Programme, Modern Art Oxford and prior to that Deputy Head of Culture for the Mayor of London. Extensive programming, community engagement and income generation experience – specifically Trusts and Foundations.

Stuart Tulloch BA (Hons) Fine Art – Head of Programme
Formerly CEO of Arthouse, Wakefield, and prior to that Curator at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, and Director of Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool. Extensive programming experience and income generation through Trusts and Foundations

Lorraine Stone MAAT – Director of Finance
Fifteen years' experience in senior finance roles in art organisations in the East and South-East regions. Extensive experience of managing large-scale and complex budgets, including restricted and unrestricted funds and commercial revenue streams.

Richard Oyarzabal BSc Hons – Development Manager
Previously Chief Executive of The Junction, Cambridge, and Joint CEO of Cardboard Citizens, where he led on fundraising. He has worked as a business planning consultant, fundraiser and producer for a number of cultural organisations in London and the East

Kelly Oxborrow – Commercial Manager
Fifteen years commercial experience in retail. She was previously Retail Operations Manager South East and Europe for Cath Kidstone.

Eddie Bacon BSc, MCIOSB – Building Manager
Extensive experience in architecture, building design and engineering. Previously worked for Colchester Borough Housing.

7. How we will make sure our organization is financially viable

7.1 Firstsite developed very detailed financial and operational plans as part of the recovery process referred to as 'our transition'. Monthly management accounts and quarterly financial Reporting in a clear and transparent format has helped management and trustees to understand more clearly how well we are doing, and under-performance that needs to be addressed. It is also help us make better decisions about investment and priorities for generating income, contributing to our sustainability.

We are leveraging every part of the building to diversify and build our revenue streams incrementally over the grant period. We have a very commercial and business-like Board, supported by our Innovation and Enterprise Working Group (made up of trustees and external entrepreneurs and business people), which plays an important role in thinking strategically about opportunities and challenges more conventional thinking.

7.2 A credible plan for income generation.

Our Innovation and Enterprise Group has planned a programme of reviewing and evaluating the following new and existing areas of income generation over the next 12 months, many of these ideas are already in the development pipeline.

Café – Firstsite has recently introduced a new partnership with We Walk The Line (WWTL) to run our Café. Funded by the Department for Work and Pensions, WWTL are a social enterprise enabling local disengaged and vulnerable people to gain vital work experience in order to enter the working world. The partnership removes all previous losses incurred by the café and introduces a modest income of 10% profit for the Grant Period.

Auditorium – We are maximising the use of our 180-seat auditorium. We have recently replaced all the projection equipment, enabling us to screen new films as

soon as they are released. The acquisition of new equipment was advised on by our new programming partner, Curzon Cinemas, who will provide the entire commercial content for the auditorium. We will supplement this programme of screenings with four other strands: artistic, educational, community and societies. Sales associated with hospitality will contribute to income.

Restaurant/Bar – Over 2016/17 Firstsite has hosted a small number of very successful pop-up restaurant events with local chefs and community organisations. A recent pop-up restaurant run by Refugee Action Colchester attracted 2,000 visitors over two days. We will be scaling this in February 2017 across x4 weekends with a view to growing a 'restaurant pop-up programme' as a potential long-term low risk prospect. As with our café and the WWTL arrangement, the plan here is to create security and sustainability for Firstsite as well as providing additional social and community opportunity for Colchester.

Catering partnership – Firstsite is exploring a partnership with a local catering company to provide hospitality for private hire, particularly for major events. We would ideally like this to be a social enterprise.

Conference / Room Hire Facilities and Community Engagement – Firstsite has several high-quality meeting and seminar rooms, that can seat between 20 and 100 people, for private dinners, seminars and conferences (in addition to the 180-seat Auditorium). We programme these with a mix of commercial activity that creates immediate revenue, along with using these facilities as a resource to support communities by providing space, initially for free. This more inclusive approach leads to longer term, slower but potentially much higher financial benefits as a result of 'advertising' our facilities to a much broader pool of potential hirers.

Business Hub – We are looking to designate one of the spaces as a hot-desking area for artists and the self-employed, providing free tea, coffee and water and high quality Wi-Fi for a minimum annual fee. This will help keep the space busy and provide income in the café.

Wedding Reception / Private party Hire – We have a 120-seat restaurant and a room for private parties that seats 120 (The Learning Studios, when not programmed). Land is available for the erection of a marquee for similar functions, particularly during the summer periods. Firstsite plans to promote these facilities as part of our Audience Development Plan.

Shop – We have recently hired a former regional sales manager of a major boutique store to redesign and evaluate options for maximizing income. We are considering a designer gift shop (none exist in Colchester), and introducing a range of Colchester products commissioned in collaboration with the four Cultural Partner organisations (Colchester Art Centre, Colchester & Ipswich Museums Services and The Mercury Theatre) and to be sold through all four venues.

Sponsorship Packages – We are investigating SMEs to both help generate income, as well as promote local businesses more widely through our planned programme of advertising and through our membership scheme to be introduced in 2017/18.

Membership Scheme. Firstsite is re-designing its members scheme to be re-launched in 2017/18. This will include offers across the auditorium, café and shop and will scale up to corporate membership for support of specific exhibitions and artistic activity.

Collectors Group – We will support the extension of our Collectors Group, who currently donate approx. £15,00 per annum to our various activities.

Artistic Programmes – We are scrutinising the artistic programme for opportunities to generate income, and forming a commercial template that can be applied to each exhibition. For example, we will develop sales of work and editions, and will procure

donations of work from artists to be sold at auction, drawing clear, up-front agreements with commercial galleries, outlining merchandise opportunities for key exhibitions.

The visitor experience – Within our plans for each area of the building, we are also developing an attitude that supports ‘a great visitor experience’. The aim is to make visits positively memorable, encouraging repeat visits and recommendations to friends and family, building our reputation as an arts and cultural centre for everyone.

Foundations and Trusts – We are developing a separate strategy to link our programmes and activities to the funding criteria of a large number of foundations and trusts, including Livery companies. We believe that we are likely to experience modest success, since Firstsite has not previously applied to many of these organisations. In addition, we are utilising the Board’s experience, in particular how best to measure impact of our activities and provide more evidence to funders.

7.3 How we will manage with less.

There is always the possibility that financial constraints applied to one of our key funders could lead to a larger than anticipated reduction in income. We look to mitigate these risks by ensuring that we work very collaboratively with our funders, so that what we are doing is in line with their priorities and requirements. In addition, collaborative working and a Risk Register will ensure that we can anticipate such eventualities and enable us to plan accordingly. Our plans are based on modest targets for income generation from Trusts and Foundations, with a small year-on-year increase. We have sought to mitigate the risk of being less successful by focusing on commercial income generation as described above.

Our Board is very experienced in business transformation and organisational change for scaling activity down, as well as up. For Firstsite, this would mean looking at reducing our operating costs further, which would impact on what, outside of our core activities and main commitments made with funders, we can or cannot deliver in our agreed Business Plan.

7.4 Developing our resilience over the next funding period.

A mixed economy of income-generation is core to our strategy in positioning Firstsite as one of the best regional art galleries in the country. It contributes to our sustainability, resilience and long-term future in a newly revitalised cultural quarter – hence making Firstsite an integral part of the town’s development.

Firstsite is in the east of Colchester, close to the Castle Museum, Mercury Theatre, Colchester Arts Centre and The Minories. Firstsite itself is located centrally, in a major regeneration area that has seen the opening of a new Arts Business Centre and multi-screen picture house (opening in late 2017). This is to be followed by a major hotel and pedestrian walkway from the train station to the gallery. Our strategy for creating Gold Square (the area around Firstsite) is supported by the local authority. In essence, we will create a new cultural quarter with outdoor performance arts spaces. Firstsite has become a major player that is already helping to nudge the regeneration of the area, and therefore maintain its position as a necessary player.

7.5 Analysis of costs and maximising efficiencies: The management accounts provide a summary of costs for review by the Finance and Risk Committee before scrutiny by the trustees. A comparison with the budget is part of the review process. A review of all utility and maintenance contracts is currently in progress, and significant savings have already been achieved. The operation of all activities is constantly considered in terms of visitor experience and effective use of resources

7.6 Fair pay for artists: Firstsite is committed to ensuring proper and fair payments to artists it works with, in recognition of their professional status, skills and experience. We consult [a-n], the artist information company, for guidance on fees and day rates for visual artists when commissioning artworks and projects and setting budgets.

7.7 Quality of financial controls and monitoring: Regular management accounts are reviewed by the Finance and Risk Committee before submission to the trustees for their scrutiny. The Finance Department is staffed by an experienced team of three people, who maintain the normal financial records, which include key control accounts, bank, cash, debtors, creditors, VAT and PAYE. A member of the Finance and Risk Committee reviews these periodically. A Risk Register has been prepared, and actions arising from the review of matters raised are being dealt with. These include the sharing of responsibilities and authorisation procedures.

7.8 Management of Reserves.

The policy of Firstsite is to maintain liquid reserves able to manage the organisation for a period of three months. An annual budget is prepared and agreed by the trustees that aims to achieve that level of reserves and to gradually add to it on an annual basis.

7.9 Business Model and financial sustainability.

Plans to develop commercial activity at the site are considered above, and we anticipate that an income stream initially of 20% of the gallery total income will come from these resources. The development of the gallery learning activities through further grant-funded activities will draw more people into the gallery and create an opportunity to share overheads. Additional resources will enable Firstsite to develop other commercial activities as it evolves into the regional centre.

7.10 Managing large-scale grants.

Accounts are prepared in accordance with the Charity SORP, identifying Restricted Grants and Unrestricted Funds separately. Requested reports are submitted accurately and on time to ensure prompt release of funds. Large-scale grants and restricted grants are identified separately on the management accounts and reviewed by the Finance and Risk Committee before scrutiny by the trustees. Separate budgets for restricted grants record the fund, in-kind and match funding, as well as direct and indirect costs that are maintained by the budget holder and reviewed regularly by the financial team.