

Curious Minds support for Blaze

Curious Minds have identified the resources in terms of finance and staff support that they can offer Blaze Young People's project and these are outlined below:

- the Blaze team with desk space at our base within the Guild Hall
- line-management and mentoring to Project Manager and the other co-ordinators
- investment up to the value of £100k – this would be backed by a robust business plan designed to see Blaze become sustainable in its own right within 2 years (or sooner)
- back-office support, including financial management and monitoring using our in-house Sage and CRM systems (managing and facilitating cash-flow when necessary)
- governance support and development
- fundraising support, including bid-writing and donor fundraising
- access and use of our contacts and influence across the cultural and education sectors
- potential to offer a range of commissions directly
- continuity of staffing using our investment as the existing grant comes to end

Curious Minds statement

"We see a clear benefit to Curious Minds in delivering this partnership arrangement.

As you are aware, as the North West Bridge organisation, we are tasked with facilitating a cultural offer for young people across the region. Our move to Preston is designed to enable us to position ourselves in Lancashire as a community asset and we are particularly keen to develop the cultural offer in and around Preston City Centre. As a Lancashire based organisation we want to ensure that the county is not seen as poor relation to the rest of the region when it comes to delivering great culture for children and young people. We also have a responsibility to support libraries to develop their offer for young people and can see that Blaze provided a sound platform to make this happen.

We are aware that LCC is under pressure to deliver considerable cuts and as Preston's only NPO, we think that we can offer Blaze the stability it needs to grow and develop so that it continues to be a resource for Lancashire's arts and cultural sector.

There are many reasons why we believe we are in a good position to support Blaze. Because we do not do any direct delivery to CYP ourselves we are uniquely able to provide support and mentoring to the Blaze team without being in direct competition with their core-business. We have many connections with the cultural and education sectors and will use these to develop trading opportunities so that Blaze does not have to rely on grant funding as it does now. We also think that our backing will secure the confidence of ACE, along with other funders and commissioners, to continue to invest in the work.

In delivering the support to Blaze we would want to continue to work in partnership with LCC to ensure the strategic direction is aligned with any future cultural strategy for the County.

The investment we are able to offer requires us to demonstrate an equivalent level of match funding. While we are happy that some of this match could be levered retrospectively via the business plan (that we'll help them to write) and future funding bids, it would be ideal to have a commitment from LCC that it will continue to invest; allowing Blaze to remain a key part of LCCs cultural portfolio.

As discussed, the ultimate ambition here would be that Blaze becomes an independent and sustainable organisation in its own right."