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EVALUATION REPORT FOR THE OPEN SCHOOL EAST MENTORING

ARTWORKS LONDON

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1 EVALUATION

1.1 Introduction

ArtWorks London supported Open School East by paying for four mentors to each provide four sessions of advice.

We facilitated a meeting with mentors and mentees and then sent out email questionnaires to each.

1.2 Strengths of the mentoring

The questionnaires and meeting suggested these strengths of the mentoring:

- **Flexibility.** “Each mentor was open to the best way to structure their support and this flexibility allowed us to seek advice at specific times where their individual skills and advice were most needed.” Mentees “Mentoring is not a problem solving activity. It has felt more like a supportive activity. Like a joint exploration.” Mentor
- **Collaboration.** “The relationships with the mentors grew organically and this led to a number of key collaborations.” Mentee
- **Different perspectives.** “The mentors broad set of backgrounds and skills proved useful as we were able to receive a range of perspectives when seeking advice and testing ideas.” Mentees “The mentors did at times give conflicting advice, however these differing opinions allowed us to consider OSE's development from multiple perspectives, this can only be considered as a strength of the process.” Mentees “The skillset of the group of mentors was very wide and, I would hope, was a strength, rather than a weakness.” Mentor
- **Links to the area.** “It was good to have a number of mentors who were connected to the area in which Open School East operates as this gave us an insight into working within the locality and assisted in creating links to organisations and collaborators.” Mentees
- **Expertise.** “The mentoring was extremely important to Open School East. To have the support of four experienced mentors was invaluable and their varied backgrounds meant we had a wealth of knowledge to draw on.” Mentees
- **Timing.** “The mentoring was early on in the life of the organisation. This was the right time as it is when most decisions are made.” Mentor

“We have learnt everything. We had never set up an organisation before.” Mentee

1.3 Weaknesses of the mentoring

The questionnaires and meeting suggested these weaknesses of the mentoring:

- **Gaps.** The gaps mentioned by mentees were: the structural problems of setting up and running a young arts organisation and charity, insurance, human resource management, and strategy. Open School East does not yet have a business plan.

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- **Communication between mentors.** Mentors met each other only briefly and didn't what the others were doing. They might have benefitted from getting to know each other.

1.4 Impact of the mentoring

Examples of the impact are:

- Justin developed a placement scheme for four young people that ran for six months in parallel to the Associate Artist Programme.
- Justin joined the Open School East board of trustees.
- Frank collaborated with Open School East on an intergenerational radio-making project funded by Arts Council England.
- Lorraine presented her practice to the associate artists and is developing ideas for a collaboration between Open School East and Middlesex University.
- John's work will form the basis for a business plan.

1.5 Lessons from the mentoring

The lessons from the mentoring are:

- One of the mentors spread the benefit of the sessions by asking the mentees to carry out homework between meetings. This seems a good way to make the best of the time.
- It was useful having mentors with experience outside the arts.
- It was useful to have links to the locality as one aspect of the criteria for recruiting mentors, as well as their other skills and experience.

1.6 Conclusion

One of the strengths of ArtWorks London is that it gave the flexibility to offer relatively small sums of money at key pivot points in a project. In the case of Open School East this created a flexible, customised area of support at a crucial time. There have been clear benefits in terms of organisational development, although some of the key questions of Open School East, such as how it will resolve long-term viability, remained unanswered at the time of our visit.