

West of England Visual Arts Alliance

BECOME a CRITICAL FRIEND for the West of England Visual Arts Alliance (WEVAA)

WHAT is WEVAA

Over the next three years, the West of England Visual Arts Alliance (WEVAA) aims to transform Bristol and the West of England into a place where the visual arts can thrive, providing opportunities and support to enable diverse local artists, curators and young people to develop their careers and achieve their potential. The goal is to make the local visual arts sector more **progressive, sustainable and inclusive by 2024**.

WEVAA's partners are committed to inclusivity and consider diversity a strength. The objective of the alliance is to reach diverse artists and practitioners, remove barriers and ensure that the programme is inclusive and relevant to those who WEVAA sets out to benefit, ensuring the different backgrounds and experiences that make up our communities are represented.

WHAT is a CRITICAL FRIEND

In order for WEVAA to succeed in its mission it is core to the programme that all voices are heard and the quality and ambition of our activity is relevant to those we wish to benefit. WEVAA therefore would like to

work with 'critical friends' who will help ensure a range of voices are taken into account, and help us fill the gaps we cannot fill ourselves. We have a variety of lived experiences within the consortium but want to expand them so we can bring more perspectives into the development of the programme.

We envisage our 'critical friends' providing fair and robust, transparent feedback on WEVAA's activities and programme in a safe space. This will allow us to enhance the programme and its already established evaluation mechanisms, in order to account for a broad range of insights from artists, creative practitioners and young people, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of this fund. We imagine our 'critical friends' might also benefit by participating in the WEVAA programme and this role will contribute to their own professional development.

WHAT is the CRITICAL FRIEND's role?

We see the role of 'critical friends' as both 'critical' as in 'essential' and 'can be critical'. The critical friends' role will help contribute to the programme's aims to achieve a progressive visual arts ecology by:

- Contributing to discussions about the range and variety of opportunities for professional development and career progression offered by the programme.
- Contributing with their perspectives on the programme's ability to empower and support young people from diverse backgrounds to pursue careers in the sector.
- Contributing to conversations around the quality of the programme's work.

- Supporting WEVAA's own improvement and self-evaluation processes.
- Asking questions and querying processes.
- Providing additional and different perspectives.

How does it work?

A critical friend will be asked to participate in some of the programme's activities, review the activities offered and attend two steering group meetings to provide their feedback, if they feel comfortable to do so. Otherwise feedback can be provided directly to WEVAA's Project Manager. The feedback can be provided in either written or verbal form, depending on the individual's preference.

Critical friends will be provided with a common template with uniform prompts to ensure this feedback is consistent and as simple as possible to complete.

Who are we looking for?

Critical friends may come from a range of backgrounds, including artists, creative practitioners, arts professionals, students and young people between 11 and 25 years old amongst others, but also audience members who take an interest into the visual arts and wish to take part.

We particularly welcome applications from people who are currently underrepresented in the UK visual arts sector, including those who identify as D/deaf, disabled, neurodivergent and or LGBTQIA+, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds, or living or working in areas of socio-economic deprivation, and those who experience racism.

What are the terms?

We would like 2 critical friends to join the WEVAA consortium each year, with the potential of being reappointed for a further year. The selected friends are each awarded a fee of £1,000 for one year, and up to £250 to cover any expenses. Within the year they will be expected to attend two Partnership Steering Group meetings (which take place quarterly), review WEVAA programme activity or events and provide feedback, totalling approximately 5 working days over a year. Any access expenses required will be covered separately by advanced agreement.

Selection Criteria

Critical friends will be appointed against the following **essential** criteria, each of equal weighting in the selection process:

- Interest in the role and how the opportunity will contribute to their own development. Interest, knowledge or expertise in the visual arts sector and understanding of the context in which the WEVAA programme is produced.
- Ability to provide fair and constructive feedback.

In addition, please let us know if you also meet the **desirable** criteria:

- Any specialisms that would benefit the participants of the WEVAA programme (artists and creative practitioners), in particular those that are currently underrepresented in the UK visual arts sector. For example: art and disability.

HOW TO APPLY

We have designed the application process to be as simple as possible. Applications will be submitted by filling out the google form linked here. This google form asks you for:

- Your Name
- Your contact information
- Your postcode and geographic location – we only accept postcodes in the areas of Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset, and North Somerset.
- If submitting as audio or video, a link to where this can be found.
- A CV (2 pages maximum)
- Why are you interested in becoming a Critical Friend for West of England Visual Arts Alliance? (up to 150 words)
- What would you like to see WEVAA achieve for the region's visual arts sector in its 3 years of funded activity? (up to 200 words)
- Do you have experience of providing feedback on other projects or programmes? (up to 150 words)
- What expertise would you bring to the Critical Friend role? (up to 200 words if applicable)
- Your access document (if applicable)

You will be asked to complete an anonymous equal opportunities form following submission of your application (used for monitoring purposes only).

If the google form causes you any difficulties, you may make your submission as a word document answering all of the above. Please email this to patrizia.ribul@spikeisland.org.uk.

DEADLINE TO APPLY: 23:59pm on May 2nd 2022

Download a Word version of this open call brief or listen to a video version here.

We realise that text-based applications do not suit everyone, so if you would like to apply in a different way, for example via video or audio, require this information in a different format, or require support in writing the application, please get in touch with us by writing to Patrizia Ribul, Project Manager, West of England Visual Arts Alliance at patrizia.ribul@spikeisland.org.uk or by calling Spike Island Reception at 0117 929 2266. We want to remove as many barriers to applying as we can.

All applicants will receive an automated email to confirm that their application has been received successfully.

Please submit your application via the google form at the bottom of this page.

PANEL SELECTION PROCESS

In the first stage, applications will be reviewed by a panel of four people from the West of England Visual Arts Alliance including representatives from Visual Arts South West, Spike Island, Creative Youth Network, and the programme's independent evaluator.

Shortlisting will be made based on the affinity of the applicants with the programme and how they articulate their ability to provide feedback, their interest in the visual arts and if the opportunity will contribute to their own development. If applicable applicants should also state any specialisms.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to a short conversation online via ZOOM week commencing 9 May 2022 and will be asked a few informal questions, which will be sent in advance.

A per diem of £125 will be available to shortlisted applicants in preparing for these conversations.