



Sheba Arts CIC Business Plan 2023-27

Company limited by guarantee, registration NO 12456940 England and Wales

Updated March 2024

1- Introduction

This document outlines Sheba Arts' plans for the next five years (2023-2027). Currently, our primary focus is on organisational development, aiming to increase our staff members to seven, offer a substantial number of training programmes for our board, staff, and volunteers, enhance paid opportunities for emerging artists, and strengthen our capacity to undertake more extensive, larger-scale projects.

Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic and limited financial resources, we successfully accomplished the goals outlined in our 2021-23 business plan. We became an NPO organisation in 2023. This achievement was made possible by the dedicated volunteer efforts of our directors and members.

2-History

Sheba Arts is described as a breath of fresh air within the Manchester art scene, and a leading voice in socially engaged practice. As a dynamic and innovative arts organisation, the infusion of creativity, community engagement, and boundary-pushing ideas injects new energy and excitement into the local art scene, leaving a lasting impression on all who experience our work.

Sheba Arts was first established in 2018 in response to the lack of/misrepresentation in the arts sector among refugee and migrant communities, and later in 2020 became a CIC. As the only migrant arts organisation in Manchester, we make art accessible to everyone regardless of their background. We have developed and platformed hundreds of artists from the Northwest.

Our work is deeply rooted in lived experiences. We recognise that every person has a unique story to tell, shaped by their background, culture, and journey. By centering on people's experiences, we strive to understand the complexities of their lives and honour the richness of their narratives. We aspire to promote social justice by providing people with a platform to share their stories and engage in mutual learning.

The Covid-19 and the ongoing cost of living crisis have brought to light the extreme inequalities within our society, particularly for migrant communities and people with protected characteristics. During the pandemic, we supported artists through digital commissions and brought two organisations under our umbrella, Culture Bridge and RAPAR Drama Group, to help us and them to grow and work together. Culture Bridge has transitioned into a CIC headquartered in Stockport, where it

offers arts and cultural programming tailored to refugee and asylum seeker communities. We also supported three emerging artists under our Talent Development Programme during and after the pandemic, providing them with mentorship, resources, and opportunities to showcase their work.

Our business plan builds on our past successes and achievements, leveraging the strengths we have cultivated through years of experience working both locally and nationally. We strive to expand our reach and deepen our impact in the communities we serve. Therefore, we will continue to update our business plan to adapt to the needs and interests of our communities and to address emerging challenges.

3-Legal and charitable status

Sheba Arts CIC is a company limited by guarantee, registration NO 12456940 England and Wales

Two members are executives and 8 are volunteers. Additional members may be co-opted as and when required. Decisions such as hiring employees, defining/updating ethos & values of the organisation, bank account and other important financial decisions are made by our board of directors.

The management team is led by the Artistic Director, supported by Executive Producer, finance manager, coordinator, admin and marketing manager, and a team of freelance creatives and between five to ten volunteers at any one time.

The governance role is fulfilled by a Board of Directors, the members of which are elected at the AGM each year. The board currently meets a minimum four times a year. The board of directors reports any issues to the board for consideration or approval.

In line with our commitment to expanding our impact and sustainability, we aim to transition from our current Community Interest Company (CIC) structure to that of a registered charity. This evolution will enable us to access additional funding streams, forge stronger partnerships, and deepen our engagement with the communities we serve, furthering our mission to promote social inclusion and cultural enrichment.

4-Objects in Article

- To empower marginalised migrant communities and promote their social inclusion through the use of the arts as a vehicle for self-expression -

- To raise public awareness of the contribution of marginalised migrant communities to Britain's cultural heritage through the use of the arts as a vehicle for communication.

5- Mission, Vision and Values

5-1 Mission statement

Sheba Arts exists to connect communities through vibrant and innovative art and cultural programmes. We aim to make art accessible to everyone and support the artistic practice and expression of people from the global majority, with a focus on migrant, refugee and undocumented communities. Our main audiences are Greater Manchester and the northwest of England.

5-2 Vision

Our vision of success is to have:

- arts and culture that reflect the diversity of the society that we live in
- a connected, thriving society where people have equal access to arts and culture and their heritage is shared
- access to spaces and resources
- arts and culture that reflects people's agency and ownership

5-3 Values

Our distinctive values are:

- We work across all art forms
- Our work is rooted in the community and we create space in which people are able to share their experiences and their culture if they wish to
- We aim to be inclusive and acknowledge that discrimination occurs across different levels (gender, race etc)
- We work across, between, and beyond the boundaries of language.

As a result of our work, our beneficiaries will develop:

- A greater sense of security and belonging
- Improved self-esteem and self-belief
- Greater powers of self-expression

5-5 Social justice

In the face of anti-immigrant rhetoric and enduring inequalities, we chose to work with individuals and groups who are impacted by all forms of injustice. We believe that through the transformative power of arts and culture, we can challenge stereotypes, bring new narratives and facilitate meaningful change. Recognising the systemic injustices faced by migrant and refugee people, we are committed to addressing these challenges through our programming and initiatives.

By providing a platform for unheard voices to be heard and valued, we strive to counteract negative narratives and promote empathy and understanding. Through storytelling, we aim to humanise the experiences of people, highlighting their resilience, creativity, and contributions to society. In doing so, we seek to challenge the dehumanisation and discrimination often perpetuated by anti-immigrant rhetoric, fostering greater empathy and solidarity across communities.

Our work goes beyond raising awareness to actively facilitating change within the society. By providing access to resources, skills development opportunities, and support networks, we empower individuals to navigate their new environments, overcome challenges, and pursue their aspirations. Through our collaborative approach, we strive to co-create solutions that address the unique needs and priorities of migrant and refugee communities, ensuring that our work is relevant, impactful, and sustainable.

6- Methods and Approaches

6-1 Grassroots Methodology

We have initiated a distinctive approach, where individuals feel a profound sense of ownership over their creations. Participants feel empowered to shape their own narratives and express themselves authentically. This ethos of ownership not only enhances the quality and relevance of our cultural offerings but also fosters a

deeper connection with our communities. As we continue to grow and evolve, we remain committed to upholding this ethos, we do this through:

- Open planning meetings with artists, communities and partners to help us shape our programme
- Sharing resource & knowledge
- Reflecting on the feedback from audiences, artists and participants

6-2 Methods

6-2-1 Co-creation

Sheba Arts follows a bottom up approach when designing and developing new projects. We co-create our programmes with our communities through consultation sessions with artists, partners and community members.

Taking into account feedback from our artists and partners, the Artistic Director presents the initial programme proposal to the board of directors at the beginning of each financial year. Upon board agreement, the Artistic Director proceeds to share the programme with funders and the executive team. The executives hire freelance workers (depending on the scale of the project; those could be freelance event organisers, workshop facilitators, artists, etc) to deliver the projects. The freelance team has a clear understanding of their tasks and responsibilities.

The executive Producer recruits the participants who will take part in the participatory projects (these participants are not paid, but Sheba Arts cover their travel and food expenses). The Creative Producer is also responsible for recruiting and training the team of volunteers who will help with the delivery of events (covering their expenses).

6-2-2- Co-creation with Partners

Sheba Arts will seek to enter into a range of partnerships in order to maximise the benefit to communities it serves. Co-producing work with cultural organisations and venues allow us to share resources and knowledge, creating a sustainable cultural offer for our participants. We recognise that partnership working will impact directly on the people we work with, thus we put in place measures to eradicate any risk emerging from partnership projects. There will be conditions attached to each partnership agreement that potential partners need to comply

with.

6-2-3 Approach

We will seek to achieve partnership working on a number of levels, e.g:

LEVEL 1: partnership programmes such as Sheba Festival and creative projects;

LEVEL 2: co-creating with organisations, institutions and community groups in designing and delivering the activities such as film nights, training, or community projects;

LEVEL 3: simple operational collaboration such as mutual assistance with publicity and marketing;

LEVEL 4: selling services to organisations and institutions,

6-2-4- Key methods of engaging external stakeholders will be:

- Co-creation: we co-create and collaborate on arts and research projects. This means that we respect every partner's contribution and all partners equally have a share of the leadership and resources;
- Self-agency: the people who take part in projects have ownership over their creation and we will not use their intellectual property without their permission;
- Crediting and promoting: partners should credit every partner in any publicity and promotion materials shared online or in print;
- Sharing of data, any information should all parties have data protection in place;
- Contributing in evaluation, sharing feedback with partners;

7- Our main partners & funders

7-1 Partners

Our approach to partnership is an open one, and we do not have an exclusive list of partners.

7-2 Funders

Our main sources of income are

- Arts Council England
- National Heritage Lottery Fund
- GMCA
- Community Fund

8- Achievements

Since its foundation in 2018 until the end of March 2024, We have collaborated with more than 210 artists and facilitators hailing from Greater Manchester and the wider North West region. Our efforts have resulted in engaging with over 4,850 live audiences and participants, as well as reaching 50,000 individuals online. Our primary beneficiaries encompass diverse backgrounds, with 44% from Black African and Caribbean communities, 18% from Middle Eastern backgrounds including Pakistani, Iranian, and Arab, 7% from Latin American origins, 21% identifying as white British/Irish/European, and 10% representing various other nationalities.

We have successfully delivered:

- 10 participatory writing and drama projects, primarily involving female and non-binary emerging artists from migrant and refugee backgrounds.
- 4 series of creative workshops spanning from 6 to 9 months each.
- 5 annual festivals held in Wigan, Salford, Manchester, Oldham, and Stockport.
- 4 online seminars conducted during the pandemic, focusing on addressing discriminations within the arts sector.
- 2 comprehensive training programmes tailored for emerging artists and facilitators.
- Support for 4 talented development artists and groups.
- 3 collaborative partnerships established with Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU) and Manchester museum and Turnpike art gallery, resulting in 4 impactful projects.

- Production of 6 podcasts with our female members highlighting their remarkable achievements and artistic journeys.
- Publication of over 50 insightful blog posts, offering diverse perspectives and valuable insights.

9 Current Programme

9-1 Themes:

Our work is structured around seven themes, which reflect and respond to the needs of our communities. These themes are:

Participatory productions: Sheba Arts is an artist and community led organisation where individuals are involved in the creation, planning, and execution of projects. Our work across a wide range of art forms from community-based projects to participatory arts and cultural events, all aimed at empowering individuals to actively contribute to and shape their communities.

Arts and Activism: we use art to ignite change, and as a catalyst for social transformation. Through the lens of creativity, artists challenge norms, provoke thought, and inspire action. We do this through events, seminars that bring together arts practitioners, activists, researchers and venues, provoking debates and solutions for challenges.

Connecting artists and communities: through Sheba Socials, we connect artists and venues that further and support their work. This includes studio or venue visits, social events and sheba salon where people bring their ideas to our producers.

Supporting emerging talents: bespoke mentoring programme for young artists to create new work or develop skills. Training, signposting to other arts organisations, providing in-kind support for emerging artists, co-producing work, arts residencies and commissions. Designing bespoke programmes for young people with disabilities or mental health difficulties or young people on the autism spectrum.

Young people: our programme places special emphasis on offering creative workshops and learning opportunities to children and young people from migrant and refugee communities. These initiatives aim to amplify their voices, while fostering skills and confidence. We actively seek collaborations that provide inspiring opportunities to young people, particularly those with emerging talents.

Wellbeing: wellbeing and the arts are an integral part of our programme. We recognise the profound impact of artistic expression on mental, emotional, and physical health, and we use the therapeutic power of creativity to promote resilience and a sense of belonging. Experiencing different art forms will allow participants to explore self-expression, cultivate mindfulness, and foster connections with others.

Digital productions: we delivered a digital festival during the pandemic which was successful and engaged with thousands of people online. Digital productions are encouraged through exhibitions and installations, video and digital screenings. Most of our projects have either a born or made digital offer or both.

Heritage: We support heritage projects by exploring and documenting the oral history and heritage of migrant communities through research and creative projects.

9-2 Programme 2024-25: Let's Create

Our ambitious 3 year programme is underpinned by a proven track record delivering against each type of activity and the Let's Create outcomes, is created with and for RMC and supported by an extensive network of place based partners.

9-1-1 Sheba Festival 24

The Sheba Festival is a month-long annual culmination of our year-round work, bringing together and showcasing Sheba Arts' activity- creative workshops, artist development and programming from across Greater Manchester and the North West throughout Refugee Month. The festival thrives on a collaborative approach, delivered through multiple cross-sector partners and ensuring that thousands of audience members from refugee and migrant and the wider community, experience a high quality cultural programme. This year's theme is Peace and Freedom.

Selecting a theme for our annual festival enables us to talk about the most pressing issues that refugee and migrant communities are experiencing. It helps us delve into the people's experiences, understand their perspectives, and discuss solutions in a creative way. By engaging with them on this level, we can ensure that our programming resonates authentically with their realities, amplifying their voices and addressing their concerns in a meaningful way. Our previous annual Sheba

festival was centred around themes of Home, Displacement, Climate Emergency and Friendship.

This year we are working in Wigan, Manchester, Salford and Rochdale. We are collaborating with SWAP, Caring & Sharing, Floatart, Multitutezinefest, and many groups and freelance artists to engage with 80 people for workshops and bring 1500 audience to our live events and attract 8000 audiences online. We have established a steering committee to observe the events and to collect feedback from people which will feed into evaluation.

9-1-2 Haideh and Nejad (2022-25)

In the past three years, we have been working on two projects with Iranian and Kurdish communities, delivering creative workshops to young children. Haideh and Nejad is the second stage of our arts and heritage project, Gardens of Babylon, with Iranian and Kurdish communities. Funded by HLF, we will work with Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relation Centre, Friends of Shahnameh and Sahba Music to deliver a series of creative workshops to the community. 10 young people have joined this project.

9-1-3 Talent Development Artist: Naomi Kalu (2023-24)

Sheba Arts was established to empower RM artists & address the lack of representation for refugees and migrants in the cultural sector. All of our work therefore provides support and paid opportunities for artists and producers from these communities. One successful strand of our work is peer to peer mentoring support to those who would like to start a new career in the arts or establish freelance work or artistic brand. Over the past few years, we have worked with two groups as associates and helped them establish in their local area. One of them is Culture Bridge led by a Kurdish woman, Chinnar Najib in Stockport. First, she attended our online training programme at the beginning of the pandemic, and through peer to peer support, created Culture Bridge as a community group to support asylum seekers & refugees in Stockport. Or Sally Hilton, originally from Guatemala, an LGBT participant of our participatory show in 2019, who is a dancer now.

From 2023 onwards we would like to build on and formalise this programme to include:

- An intensive mentoring programme for 3 associate artists, producers or community workers from RMC to start or sustain careers. The programme will support their professional development and broker relationships with the arts

sector in GM & nationally. These associates will be commissioned, programmed and paid to deliver on our workshops & festivals.

- A wider, open programme of skills development workshops, with guest speakers delivering online and in-person sessions covering both creative and arts business topics;
- The Sheba Salon- quarterly creative networking events and food, welcoming artists, creatives and community workers at all stages of their careers from across the North. Hosted in partnership with The Old Courts, Lasar in Wigan, Caring&Sharing in Rochdale and Doosti in Salford.
- Advocacy in the GM, and national, arts sector through speaking and attendance at networking events, conferences and through our communications work.

This programme of support will ensure that our associate groups and artists are able to sustain their careers and fulfil their potential in the creative industries, after their official associate period has ended.

9-1-4 Wigan Outreach Programme (2024-26)

A 3 year programme in Wigan borough, delivering creative workshops and training sessions to the people from refugee and migrant communities. Starting in July 2024, this programme is set to engage with over 800 people as workshop participants and 95 people for the training programmes.

By offering a variety of art forms and courses, in venues across Wigan, we will transform these spaces into vibrant centres where people want to come and spend time, as well as learn skills to boost their confidence and improve access to the job market. We regularly receive feedback about how welcoming the space we create is and that people were glad they came to experience something new and make friends. 23% of participants at our current monthly hub in Wigan are from white working class backgrounds with 77% from migrant and refugee backgrounds. The workshops create a welcoming environment where refugee people feel heard and they share their language and skills with the host community.

This project we are proposing will:

- provide a platform for people to connect with each other around shared experience which helps to break down social barriers and foster a sense of community.
- encourage dialogue and understanding between different people and groups, promoting understanding and tolerance.

- provide tools and resources for local people and migrant communities to experience arts and learn skills, creating a more livable, and equitable environment.
- help people to develop skills and confidence in a non-academic way. This creates a pathway into the job market for the new refugees, therefore supporting them to integrate into their new society.

9-1-5 Sheba Socials

This dynamic programme of networking activities offer a space for like-minded creatives to connect with each other and share their work. It enables artists to come together and learn from each other, mingle, and be inspired. We will hold a number of cultural outings and networking events to engage our artist communities with Manchester's cultural scene.

The aim of this is for our communities to learn more about opportunities, performance and exhibition spaces, and ways to become involved with other artists, many of whom are part of Sheba Arts' community already.

Marketing strategy

Sheba Arts will implement a combined marketing strategy to engage with artists, participants, volunteers and audience through:

- Commission call outs for creatives;
- Leaflets/posters online & in print to promote events;
- attending drop-in sessions at refugee support organisations - to establish relationships with service users, staff and volunteers from these organisations;
- Visits to schools and other community groups, venues such as libraries;
- PR , talking to local radios, magazines and online news agencies;
- publicity through website and monthly newsletter:
- social media (Facebook, Twitter , Youtube & Instagram) - taking into account experts' advice such as:
 - Posting during times when the content gets the most of attention. I.E. lunch time in weekdays - see more info here: <https://sproutsocial.com/insights/best-times-to-post-on-social-media/> - fb-times
 - Tagging relevant partners, participants and organisations in posts (with their permission) + using the right hashtags;

- Writing content in an accessible language that is attractive for our audience - exploring which words/expressions could be problematic, and which ones are more used by our target audience;
- Selecting the best images for posts (high quality, relevant, that are attractive and representative of what we do and what we want to advertise);

Sheba Arts will maintain a sustainable relationship with organisational stakeholders (local strategic planners and funders, partners) additionally through:

- Organising/attending networking meetings and events;
- Information-sharing via e-mail list - not just the newsletter, but also events notifications

Sheba Arts Structure

