

Julie's Bicycle

CREATIVE • CLIMATE • ACTION



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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Board Environmental Champions Programme

Supporting arts organisations to put environmental ambition and responsibility at the centre of their governance.

Introduction

The cultural sector has an urgent role to play in responding to the climate, nature and justice crisis we face as a society, and governance has a central role in this response. The sector is uniquely placed to influence and create the conditions for profound change, that places equity at its heart.

The partnership between an organisation's non-executive and executive leadership is a unique opportunity for joint commitment and aspiration. Inspiring leadership at governance level unlocks ambition, imagination and urgency and can support a partnership approach that can lead to meaningful impact and enable real change across the arts and culture sector.

The Board Environmental Champions Programme aims to support climate action at governance level to enable arts organisations to accelerate their sustainability plans, reduce their environmental impact, and inspire peers and audiences at a time when it is most needed.

Designed for Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) and Investment Principle Support Organisations (IPSOs), the Board Environmental Champions Programme aims to support your Boards, or their equivalent, to embed environmental responsibility at governance level. This will enable arts organisations to accelerate their sustainability plans, reduce their environmental impact, and inspire peers and audiences at a time when it is most needed.

About the Programme

Participation in the programme will enable organisations to embed Arts Council England's Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle effectively. It will equip Board Members with the confidence and knowledge to effectively partner, support and challenge executive leaders, to set strategies and targets, helping organisations build environmental responsibility into their mission and business model.

This free programme offers a simple framework, training and peer-networking opportunity for cultural organisations:

- To put in place effective Board Environmental Champions
- To support best practice in governance and leadership

It is designed in consultation with the sector:

- To upskill Boards to confidently support their organisation to deliver Arts Council England's Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle
- To inspire their ambition
- To be focused on governance, not management
- To be light-touch and practical

It is available to all cultural organisations within the NPO and IPSO portfolio who have a governing body, such as a Board, advisory group or equivalent.

What's Involved?

The programme provides:

- A **role description** for a Board Environmental Champion.
- A short **digital guide to being a Champion** and putting the role into practice. This includes an overview of relevant governance issues, case studies and tips, as well as signposting to further resources or support.
- Access to Julie's Bicycle's **climate literacy e-learning platform** for your Champion. This includes two core self-paced modules on carbon and climate literacy in 2023, with a module on governance available next year.
- A series of online **networking events** (90 minutes every 6 months) with briefings on key issues of relevance to governance, expert speakers, and the chance to meet peers, discuss and share knowledge.
- A short **newsletter** (every 4-6 months) with environmental topics of relevance to governance. This will be sent to Champions and nominated staff leads.
- Access to the **network of Board Environmental Champions**.

How to Sign Up

Participating organisations need to identify a Board Environmental Champion, a senior leadership representative for them to liaise with, and sign up via our online registration form.

The programme is **open for registration from July 2023** and the accompanying resources are available from the **programme launch in October 2023**.

Once the programme is live, organisations and Board Environmental Champions that have signed up to participate can download and use the scheme logo.

After the initial launch in October 2023 organisations can continue to join the programme at any point.

Photo by Ruth Davey



What Is the Role of a Board Environmental Champion?

A Board Environmental Champion is a designated member of a Board / governing body who plays a lead role on environmental responsibility at the governance level for an organisation.

The role of a Board Environmental Champion is to:

- Take a special interest in environmental impact, strategy and plans.
- Take a view on the organisation's overall approach and level of ambition, and support and challenge the organisation to drive change at an appropriate pace.
- Help ensure the organisation puts the right resources and investment in place to achieve their aims.
- Propose Board discussions on environmental issues and values as appropriate.
- Advocate for the importance of best practice in environmental responsibility.
- Consider environmental impacts and sustainability when considering broader Board business and ask questions to 'test' thinking and ambition and ensure sustainability is fully considered.

- Act as a link to the designated senior executive lead on sustainability.
- Help the Board to fulfil its commitment to embed Environmental Responsibility as part of the Arts Council England agreement – including overseeing the organisation’s annual Investment Principle plan.
- Undertake appropriate training and induction to help you fulfil the role.
- Develop an understanding of the relevant governance issues – such as risk, resilience, ethics.
- Connect with other Board Environmental Champions as appropriate.

You don’t need to be an expert on the environment but you should be interested in sustainability and keen to learn more about the work and impacts in this respect – and ready to champion efforts to change and inspire others.

Adapting the Programme to Suit Your Needs

We want the programme to provide a basic framework and principles for all organisations but recognise that organisations come in all shapes and sizes and are at different levels of engagement with environmental issues. You are welcome to adapt the framework, resources and levels of commitment to best suit the scale and nature of your organisation.

We know that Trustees and Board Members are volunteers and often have limited time. At a basic level we recommend that a champion can commit 1 day's time to take part in initial training, read the guide and meet staff leading your environmental work. Beyond this, we suggest ½ day each quarter to engage with the organisation, explore relevant topics and take part in the Champion's network – but this can be adjusted up or down according to your own circumstances.

Programme Themes

Topics that we would hope to cover through the programme guide, e-learning and network events over time include:

- Climate justice, ethics and values.
- Net Zero, decarbonisation and adaptation.
- Managing risk and uncertainty, fundraising and finance.
- Overseeing creation of policies, plans and targets with appropriate resources, using data to inform decision-making, and enabling organisational change.
- Understanding systems change.
- Advocacy, place-based approaches and the role of programming.

- Horizon scanning e.g. energy pricing trends, national and international climate policy updates.
- Charity law in relation to the Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle (ERIP) objectives for influence, education and advocacy.

Future Development

We are launching the programme as a pilot to test the approach, and to enable us to continue to develop the support offered. In future we hope the programme might evolve to include:

- Access to a searchable directory of organisations signed up to the programme, to enable peer to peer networking.
- Over time we will seek to embed delegated leadership and momentum, where Champions convene relevant peer groups by sector, issue or geographic area.
- Whilst organisations are likely to appoint Champions from existing Board Members in the first instance, as the programme becomes more widely recognised and adopted, there is the potential for organisations to use the programme to support Trustee recruitment and for prospective Trustees to use the standard as part of their credentials.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the individuals and organisations that have helped us to develop this programme.

About Julie's Bicycle

Julie's Bicycle is a pioneering not-for-profit organisation mobilising the arts and culture to take action on the climate and ecological crisis. Founded by the music industry in 2007 and now working across the arts and culture, JB has partnered with over 2000 organisations in the UK and internationally. Combining cultural and environmental expertise, Julie's Bicycle focuses on high-impact programmes and policy change to meet the climate crisis head-on.

The Arts Council England Programme

In 2012, Arts Council England launched its Environmental Programme, becoming the first cultural body in the world to embed environmental reporting into its funding agreements. Julie's Bicycle works in partnership with Arts Council England to deliver its Environmental Programme, built on a shared vision of the transformative role of culture to tackle the climate crisis.

Responding to the need to support Boards, or their equivalent, to embed environmental responsibility at governance level, in 2023 the Board Environmental Champions programme was launched. The programme aims to equip Board Members with the confidence and knowledge to effectively partner, support and challenge executive leaders, to set strategies and targets, helping organisations build environmental responsibility into their mission and business model.

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