

Annual Review

April 2022 – March 2023



Welcome to Essex Cultural Diversity Project's Annual Review for 2022-23

Essex Cultural Diversity Project energises diversity in arts and heritage. Our mission is to create opportunities, stimulate participation and provide a focal point for the development and celebration of diversity through arts and heritage activity. Essex Cultural Diversity Project is an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation

Visit us: essexcdp.com

"Having experienced first-hand the invaluable work that Essex Cultural Diversity Project does in cultivating racial equality and intercultural understanding through arts, heritage and culture, we are delighted and honoured to have been invited to be Patrons. In our own practice as artists, we share many of the ECDP's values and aims and are very much looking forward to lending our support"
The Singh Twins, ECDP Patrons



Foreword: Miriam Stead, Chair of Essex Cultural Diversity Project

2022-23 was another brilliant year for Essex Cultural Diversity Project.

The Singh Twins became our patrons and we are proud to have the support of the internationally renowned, contemporary British artists. Their award-winning practice explores important issues of social, political and cultural debate, which chime well with our core values.

We continued to build on partnerships in Essex and beyond, jointly developing projects giving diverse artists and communities a much-needed platform for their work.

Key commission themes this year include migration, home and the environment. Projects took place in all corners of Essex, Amersham in Buckinghamshire, and even in Adelaide, as we celebrated connections between Australia and the UK through stories of the Ten Pound Poms.

It was a good year for *Global Village*, which spread positive Summer festival vibes across the county, celebrating music and dance from around the world. There was plenty of audience interaction too, from Bollywood dancing in Chelmsford, to group Tai-Chi in Hadleigh Park.

Our annual festival celebrating cultural links between East Anglia and Punjab was bigger than ever, this year spanning Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. One highlight was the *Thetford Mela* where local residents and visitors enjoyed live performances, Indian food and danced all afternoon in glorious sunshine.

This year we bade sad and heartfelt farewells to two of the county's most valued collaborators and community connectors: Lawrence Walker, Chair of Black History Month Colchester, and Jo Melville, founder of South Essex African Caribbean Association. Both have positively shaped our programmes over the years and their energy, creativity and commitment to diversity will be missed.

Thank you to Arts Council England, Essex County Council and other funders and partners who have supported us and our community, and all the artists and audiences who have come together this year. I'd also like to thank ECDP's core team for all their hard work, and our trustees for their continued support.

AUDIENCES THIS YEAR

We've reached over:

115,000 at events and exhibitions

500,000 online

3,500,000 through tv, press and media

2,300 community participants

680 creative practitioners have been supported through our work

This Year's Commissions

Essex Cultural Diversity Project works closely with community and partner organisations to help artists explore diversity and develop their participant-led, socially engaged practices. Commissions capture the spirit of place, give people a voice, connect communities and let people tell their own story in their own words.

Time Will Tell Ten Pound Poms

For their commission, Time Will Tell Theatre created a new participatory performance to tell the stories of the Ten Pound Poms who emigrated from Britain to Australia, as part of the Assisted Passage Migration Scheme launched in 1945. The scheme enabled those from any British colony to go to Australia for £10.

Many left England from Tilbury Port in Essex to travel to Port Adelaide, and so Time Will Tell's promenade piece was performed at Tilbury. It was attended by community groups from along the Estuary in Essex and Kent who were keen to explore their own experiences of migration. It was then taken to Adelaide and performed at the South Australian Maritime Museum.

Ten Pound Poms was an Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Creative Estuary co-commission, working in collaboration with Port Enfield Adelaide Council, History Trust of South Australia and Tilbury on the Thames Trust.

"My motivation for coming today was to relive my journey from India to the UK" Attendee, Tilbury Port

"The atmosphere was brilliant. I felt part of a community and the story told felt relevant and important ... reflecting the lived experience of the people who attended" Attendee, Tilbury Port

"My family enjoyed the day immensely and found the performance inspiring and informative... they used the environment of the historic port to add a strong sense of context and occasion to the performance and to bring the story to life" Attendee, Tilbury Port



Image: Time Will Tell performing at Tilbury Docks
Image on front: ABCD Bollywood leading a dance session at *Global Village* in Hadleigh Park

Lata Upadhyaya

Populate or Perish

We continued exploring the stories of the Ten Pound Poms, commissioning visual artist Lata Upadhyaya to create a series of work based on the experiences and impact of migration. Lata researched individual stories from the period, speaking to people in Australia as well as families based in the UK. The final artwork comprised six clear suitcases, each representing a stage in the journey, exploring motivations and decisions to emigrate, and the wider context of the scheme in both the UK and Australia. The work captured personal experiences of departing, travelling and settling, and the significance these journeys had on people's lives.



Nabil Ali

Along the Salt Marsh, Bradwell-on-Sea

Through his work Nabil Ali often explores history, the environment and coastal erosion, using materials found in the location to connect process with place. For his commission Nabil produced a new series of land and seascape paintings depicting the Bradwell-on-Sea coastline. The collection responds to an area along the coastal walk showing viewpoints of the environment and nature, from farmers' fields to seascapes. The paintings were exhibited in The Chapel of St Peter on the Wall, one of oldest largely intact churches in England, and at St Thomas' Church in Bradwell-on-Sea.



Sri-Kartini Leet

Amersham Roots

Sri-Kartini Leet was commissioned for a project with Amersham Museum in Buckinghamshire, as part of a three-year partnership between Essex Cultural Diversity Project and Farnham Maltings, funded by the Rothschild Foundation.

As an artist, Sri-Kartini uses photography as a tool for social change; her interest lies in exploring photographs as traces of the past, and the important role they play in acts of remembering, narrating and constructing personal histories.

The aim of the commission was to engage adults aged 30 and under, to creatively capture stories about Amersham from those born since the museum opened in 1991. Sri-Kartini explored the idea of locating one's roots through significant memories, objects and places, creating portraits of Amersham residents within their homes and local surroundings. She was interested in exploring our relationship to the environment and our homes, and the different ways domestic space can represent identity and a sense of cultural belonging.



Image (c) Sri-Kartini Leet, the Artist

Becky Vincer

A Gift For Dunton Hills

For the second year running we commissioned an artist in partnership with Brentwood Borough Council to explore the evolving development of Dunton Hills Garden Village, working in collaboration with communities as part of the placemaking process. We invited creative practitioners to propose an artwork as a potential 'gift' for each new future resident of Dunton Hills.

Becky Vincer worked with children, young people and community groups to co-design a picnic blanket. As a gift for future residents, the picnic blanket will celebrate diversity, culture and community, offering a mutual talking point and conversation starter to bridge connections between new neighbours.

Project participants included pupils from West Horndon Primary School, members of the Endeavour Youth Club, Daily Bread Community Café, Forget Me Not Activity Club for those living with Dementia, and Doddinghurst Road Toddler Group, as well as visitors to Brentwood Borough Council's Summer Family Fun Days.

"This was an exciting commission that gave us a unique opportunity to connect existing communities in the borough to the new garden village and engage them in creative placemaking. The final design is a wonderful gift for new residents to encourage enjoyment of the abundance of green and natural spaces that will be available at Dunton Hills" Councillor Sandy Tanner, Brentwood Borough Council's Chair of the Planning Committee



Janetka Platon

Saffron Walden Museum

Janetka Platon was the commissioned artist for Saffron Walden Museum, as part of the museum's *Lost Language of Nature* project. For her project Janetka creatively responded to the taxidermy collection of birds at the museum, exploring global migration and the emotional significance of what it means to migrate, cope with the loss of home, and how we make 'home' elsewhere.

Birds represent movement across borderless skies, symbolising the local and global on a micro and macro scale. But as taxidermy objects their mobility is freeze-framed; like the birds, our body might be in one place, but culturally, historically and emotionally we are connected to multiple locations, people and places.

Taking the global taxidermy collection as a starting point for creative workshops, Janetka worked with students at Joyce Frankland Academy to share and explore stories of migration. With a strong focus on migrant communities and under-represented voices in the museum's collections, the project sought to empower participants to make connections and explore their own heritage.

Janetka created a handmade artist book that will be displayed alongside the museum's taxidermy collection, as part of their *Lost Language of Nature* touring exhibition.

"It was a pleasure to work with you, I was so impressed by the way in which our young people engaged with the activities, learning experiences they will remember for rest of their time here." Teacher, Joyce Frankland Academy



This Year's Projects, Festivals and Events

Essex Cultural Diversity Project delivers projects across the south east of England that tackle challenging issues, tell hidden stories, promote tourism, foster community wellbeing, and help local people engage with the cultural heritage and history of the area in which they live.

Global Village

This year we presented a series of *Global Village* events across the county, which captured the summer festival feeling, celebrated diversity and engaged different communities across Essex.

Global Village took place on Chelmsford High Street, as part of the *Streets Alive* festival, and at Hadleigh Country Park, supported with funding from Arts Council England, Essex County Council and Active Essex, to celebrate the county's parks and green spaces.

In the run up to the large *Global Village* events in July, a series of small satellite events warmed up audiences with fun community workshops taking place in May half term at Hadleigh, Danbury, Weald and Cudmore Grove Country Parks. Community and creative partners who led the workshops were BrazilArte, Essex Multicultural Activities Network, Colchester Chinese Culture Society, Efua Sey Cultural Academy and Lata Upadhyaya's *Arts in Transit*.



Image: The Indian Rhythm, Bollywood dancing at *Hear Me Roar!* for International Women's Day

Festival of East Anglia and Punjab

The *Festival of East Anglia and Punjab 2022* explored the cultural links between East Anglia in the UK and Punjab, through the story of Maharajah Duleep Singh and the last royal family of the Punjab who lived near Thetford. This year's festival also marked the 75th Anniversary of India and Pakistan independence, and Partition.

With events taking place across Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, the *Festival of East Anglia and Punjab* brought communities together to share cultures, customs and traditions through heritage and the arts. With a wide range of activities, from melas, music and performances, to talks, food and family events, the festival had something for everyone, appealing to people of all ages and from different backgrounds.

"Very important to support the cultural connection to our town. What a brilliant vibrant event - we love Thetford's Sikh connection ... it's a rich history" Thetford resident and festival attendee



Celebrating Diversity across Schools in Braintree

We worked with Essex Music Education Hub and Braintree District Cultural Education Partnership to deliver an exciting cultural diversity music project in schools.

Seven creative practitioners each worked closely with a partner teacher in six schools across the Braintree district. The aim was to help young people understand other cultures and traditions through music, stories, maps and videos, and pilot new ways of working that could be embedded into school practice, developing a bank of teaching resources to be shared with other schools.

The project was supported by Essex County Council's Virtual Schools initiative, ensuring that we reached the schools' Looked After Children, pupils who speak English as an additional language, those receiving the pupil premium grant, and those who have special educational needs.

Participating schools: John Bunyan Primary, Great Bradford Infants, John Ray Infants, St Francis Catholic Primary, Honywood School and Lyons Hall Primary.

Creative Practitioners: Abdoulaye Sanfo, Anna Mudeka, BrazilArte, Gurdain Rayatt, Harkirat Singh Rayatt, Jonathan Mayer and Josh Doughty.

An Indian Princess in Essex

With the help of a community grant from Brentwood Borough Council and National Lottery Heritage Fund, we told the little-known story of Helen Randhir Singh Ahluwalia of Kapurthala, an Indian Princess who is buried at All Saints Church in Doddinghurst near Brentwood.

We worked with a range of partners including the Anglo Punjab Heritage Foundation and All Saints Church, to bring together sikh historians and a community of volunteer researchers to explore, celebrate and create new materials. Through the project Princess Helen's story has been shared widely, at presentations and food sharing events for the local parish and visiting Sikh communities, a new website and short film about her life and heritage, and a pop-up exhibition curated by Simran Bance, which will go on tour across Essex later in 2023.



The Human Library

Human Libraries take place all around the world. Just like in a real library, a visitor to *The Human Library* can borrow a book from a range of titles. The difference is that books are people, and reading is a conversation. The event was highly successful, and we had queues of readers and repeat borrowers throughout the afternoon, who came to connect with people they wouldn't normally meet, and celebrate positive differences in our communities.

We worked in partnership with the Human Library Organisation, Essex Book Festival and the Mercury Theatre to bring *The Human Library* to Colchester, supported through Colchester Borough Council's Cultural and Creative Events Fund.

"Today's conversations enabled me to consider different lived experiences, how we label people, why we insist on labelling people and importantly the richness and beauty of humanity and my neighbours." Reader at the Human Library

"It's ALL about dialogue. It's ALL about treading in another's shoes. I wish these events were mandatory. I truly believe it would erase racism, sexism, ableism and every other -ism if we just heard each other's stories." Human Book



Hear Me Roar! Empowering Women

We celebrated International Women's Day this year by teaming up with Eye of Boudica, a Colchester based initiative that is raising awareness of women's safety and empowerment. We organised and co-programmed *Hear Me Roar!* an evening of short cabaret performances at the Mercury Theatre that collectively and creatively celebrated the achievements of women, shining a light on issues affecting women today, and driving forward gender parity and positive change.

We also supported Eye of Boudica's wider *Roar! Women's Festival* which took place in venues across the city, including a day of stalls and activities at Firstsite to accompany their BIG WOMEN exhibition, a Women's march, and a radical quilt making project.



Canvey Zingt 2023 Celebrating Jewish Culture

Canvey Zingt 2023 saw the return of the hugely popular and successful *Yiddish Song Project* to primary schools in Canvey Island. The project first took place in 2018, responding to an influx of Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox) Jewish families relocating from North-East London - a great opportunity for Essex school children to celebrate and learn more about Jewish music and culture.

Workshops took place in four schools, with Year 5 pupils introduced to themes around Jewish culture and music through learning songs in Yiddish and English. A final performance took place at Winter Gardens Academy, where 240 children from all participating schools performed in front of an audience of parents and family members.

The project was jointly funded by Essex Cultural Diversity Project, Essex Music Education Hub, Shores Charitable Trust, School contributions and Jewish Music Institute.

Projects We've Supported

As well as running our own programmes, we partner with and promote other projects that celebrate diversity, explore cultural heritage and create platforms for new work. Here are a few highlights for 2022-23:

Black History Month



We promoted events taking place across Essex in October 2022 hosted by partners, supporters and friends, such as the BHM Chelmsford event organised by the New Generation Development Agency (pictured above).

Grand Indian Bazaar



Our funding helped to support diverse artists performing at the *Grand Indian Bazaar*, bringing Circus Raj and the Heritage Brass Band of Rajasthan to audiences in Waxham, rural Norfolk.

Kabul Goes Pop at Mercury Theatre



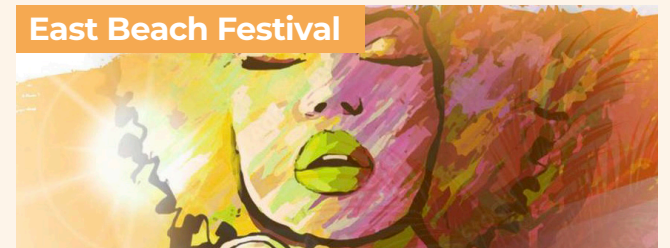
We funded community engagement around Mercury Playwright alumni Waleed Akhtar's new play *Kabul Goes Pop*, which explored a true story of Afghanistan's first youth music TV programme.

Jamaican Independence Celebration



We sponsored S&S Caribbean Café's *Jamaican Independence Celebration* event at Firstsite in Colchester.

East Beach Festival



We supported the Caribbean music festival and carnival at Shoeburyness East Beach, celebrating Southend's new city status and 60 years of Jamaican Independence.

Thurrock Film Festival 2022



Thurrock Film Festival is an annual event celebrating a diverse range of independent, heritage and family films across indoor and outdoor venues. Our contribution supported live musicians at the festival's Park Cinema on August Bank Holiday Monday.

129th Anniversary of the Death of Maharajah Duleep Singh



We marked the anniversary of the death of Maharajah Duleep Singh by supporting a reception, wreath laying ceremony and prayers at Elveden in Norfolk, organised by the Anglo Punjab Heritage Foundation.

Productive Partnerships

Partnership is at the heart of Essex Cultural Diversity Project's work, and we value strong alliances and collaborative working to collectively celebrate diversity in Essex and beyond.



Image: the Bangladeshi Women's Association Essex (BWAE) celebrating the Queen's Jubilee with Colchester Chinese Culture Society

Working with Firstsite To Welcome The Singh Twins to Essex

In 2022 we brought *The Singh Twins: Slaves of Fashion* exhibition to Essex in partnership with Firstsite, Colchester. The show explored narratives around Empire, enslavement and consumerism, through retelling the colonial history of Indian textiles.

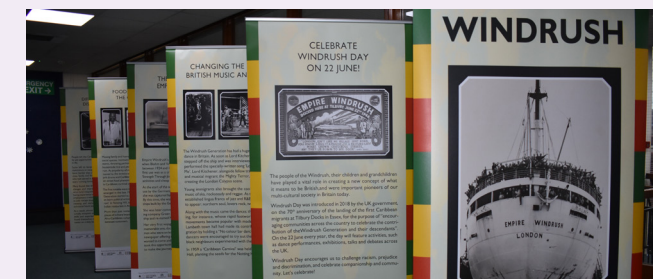
We programmed a special community and family day inspired by the show. Those attending spent time with the exhibition, took part in artist led activities, and enjoyed a free curry. The day was well attended by visitors to Firstsite and local families, as well as A Little History of the Sikhs with the Karamsar Punjabi School, and members of the Sikh Women's Alliance from East London.



Pop Up Exhibitions At Essex Libraries

This year over 36,000 library visitors engaged with our pop-up exhibition celebrating the Windrush Generation, as part of an ongoing tour across the county in partnership with Essex Libraries. Throughout the year the exhibition was hosted by libraries in Harwich, Saffron Walden, Great Parndon, Rayleigh, Braintree, Waltham Abbey and Brentwood, and also toured with the Outreach Mobile Library as part of Black History Month in October.

Chelmsford Library also showed our pop-up exhibition on Princess Sophia Duleep Singh as part of Essex Book Festival, alongside a special event with author and girls' rights activist Sufiya Ahmed, who led an empowering workshop for 9-12 year olds, using the story of British Indian suffragette Princess Sophia Duleep Singh as inspiration.



Media Partnerships Promoting Diversity in Radio and Television

Each year Essex Cultural Diversity Project strengthens its productive working relationship with local TV, radio and media, helping key outlets diversify their programming by sourcing interviewees, guests and contributing to news stories.

We are a regular feature on BBC Essex's radio programme *Essex Voices*, and themes for programmes this year have included Eid with Chelmsford Muslim Association, Diwali with Chelmsford Hindu Association, and Chinese New Year with Colchester Chinese Culture Society.

We are also part of the ITV Anglia Inclusion and Diversity Group, attending local and national panel meetings, and recommending news stories that promote diversity.

Other media partners include the Sikh Channel, PTC Punjabi, Punjab Times weekly news and Ajit Weekly, who have been covering our projects working with various communities around the story of Maharajah Duleep Singh and his family, and Doddinghurst's Indian Princess.

Local Nature Partnership Board A shared focus on the Environment

We are Board Members of the Essex Local Nature Partnership (LNP) which brings Essex-based and strategic organisations together to support collaborative action to protect, improve, create and connect the county's natural landscape to deliver multiple, environment, social and economic benefits.

Our ongoing commitment to environment, nature and diversity through our partnerships and creative programme is well placed to support the LNP. Nature and the environment continue to be a key focus and we will be working in areas of outstanding natural beauty, coastal towns, country parks and woodlands throughout Essex and East Anglia.

Through the LNP, work is starting on a Local Nature Recovery Strategy with guidance set out by the Government. This will include targets in relation to nature and the climate, ways to ensure people can access and engage with local green and natural spaces, and strategies towards achieving Biodiversity Net Gain over the next 25 years. Our role will be important as we will ensure a broad and diverse engagement with the work of the LNP, with our programme opening up opportunities for diverse communities to get involved and take action.

ActiveAte Food Programme With Chelmsford Muslim Association

Working in partnership with Chelmsford Muslim Association, we supported an eight-week program as part of *Essex ActivAte*, the Holiday Activity and Food programme run by Active Essex in partnership with Essex County Council and funded by the Department for Education. The programme included workshops with Community Chef Sajida Begum, part of IQRA Learning based in Chelmsford. There were also activities for Muslim, Sikh and Bangladeshi families at the local Mosque and Community Centre, and a final celebration and food sharing event during the Muslim Festival of Eid.

Our work with Colchester Chinese Culture Society

We once again worked with Colchester Chinese Culture Society on a number of projects this year, celebrating our strong working relationship with the Essex based arts and community group.

We supported their Jubilee Celebrations, made possible through the *Let's Create Jubilee Fund* by UK Community Foundations. Over the four-day bank holiday, the society hosted several events across Colchester and Tendring, including activities on the beach and at the local allotment to share food with communities, and a street party to showcase Chinese culture and performance.

We supported the *Festival of Jiangsu and Tendring* in November 2022 which took place in the UK, China and in the Metaverse. The UK exhibition was hosted by Harwich Arts and Heritage Centre. The festival built on the success of our joint connections with China, and last year's online *Festival of Colchester and Jiangsu*.

In January, we welcomed in Year of the Rabbit both in Colchester and abroad, and were honoured to join the thousands who celebrated the 2023 Chinese New Year at Dubai Opera with a celebratory gala. It was an evening of colour, culture, community and celebration, and Colchester Chinese Culture Society performed alongside over seven hundred other Chinese artists from around the world.



International Links

International work is key for Essex Cultural Diversity Project, and we will seek opportunities for East of England based diverse artists to showcase their work abroad, through collaboration with a range of partners. Through our work this year our international contacts are growing, expanding further across India, China, the Middle East and Europe.

We made excellent links with the Chinese Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the UAE, Yiming Zhang, and the Chinese Consul General in Dubai, Xuhang Li to further explore opportunities for Essex based Chinese artists to perform at future events.

Following on from the *Ten Pound Poms* commission at the Maritime Museum Port Adelaide, we have had continued conversations regarding future collaborations with the City of Port Adelaide Enfield and the History Trust of South Australia.

Essex Cultural Diversity Project was part of a delegation of 28 UK creative practitioners and arts organisations who attended D-CAF, The Downtown Contemporary Arts Festival in Cairo in October 2022. We have forged a friendship agreement with D-CAF, Egypt's largest international multi-disciplinary contemporary arts festival to support opportunities with Essex-based artists for future events.



Supporting Creative Practitioners

Essex Cultural Diversity Project aims to develop infrastructure to strengthen and support individuals and organisations working in diversity in arts and heritage across the region. This year we programmed a number of activities and events to support professional development, signpost opportunities, and provide platforms for artists to network and share their work with others.

In the Frame

We launched *In the Frame*, a series of monthly articles for our website and social media channels, featuring diverse creative professionals. The new series was an opportunity to focus on and promote individuals' creative practices outside our programmes, get to know people we've not worked with before, and to catch up with those who we've not seen for a while. We visited them in their studio, workplace, town or city, to chat to them about their work and share inspirations behind their practice.



ECDP Radio & ECDP TV

Launched during the pandemic to keep audiences entertained, informed and connected, we continued to develop ECDP Radio and ECDP TV, our platforms for audio podcasts and video. We created new content connected to our artistic programme, sharing TV and radio programmes online throughout the year. These are continuing to attract audiences, with around 16,000 views across our channels in this year alone.

Stand Up for Diversity

Stand Up for Diversity is a series of events that provide regular opportunities for artists working with diverse and hard-to-reach audiences, to come together and share their work with peers, through three-minute mini-talks and soap-box shout outs about why diversity matters.

Delivered in partnership with Essex Book Festival, there were two events this year; one at Essex Writers House hosted by Metal Southend, with a focus on writing, poetry and the spoken word; and another in Colchester in collaboration with the Mercury Theatre, which brought people together to champion diversity in theatre and the performing arts.

"Great event, incredibly important to keep providing platforms like this. These voices and stories need to be heard" SU4D Attendee



Community Heritage Workshop

As part of our regular programme of *Artist Salons* that offers support to creative practitioners working in diversity, we ran a Community Heritage Workshop in partnership with the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Culture Chelmsford.

The workshop was aimed at professionals working with diverse Essex-based charities and not-for-profit organisations interested in delivering heritage projects. Through presentations, case-studies and one-to-one sessions, it offered an opportunity to hear about funding sources, get tips on the process of applying and managing project grants, to connect with other community organisations and develop ideas for projects.

Financial Overview

In 2022/23 Essex Cultural Diversity Project completed its fifth year as an Arts Council England National Portfolio organisation, after securing a twelve-month extension to funding due to Coronavirus.

After an exceptional year in 2021/22 with almost double our usual income, with additional funding to support organisations, communities and individuals in need through Covid-19, we returned to core activity. Therefore our total annual income for this year was £324,635, which is more in line with previous years.

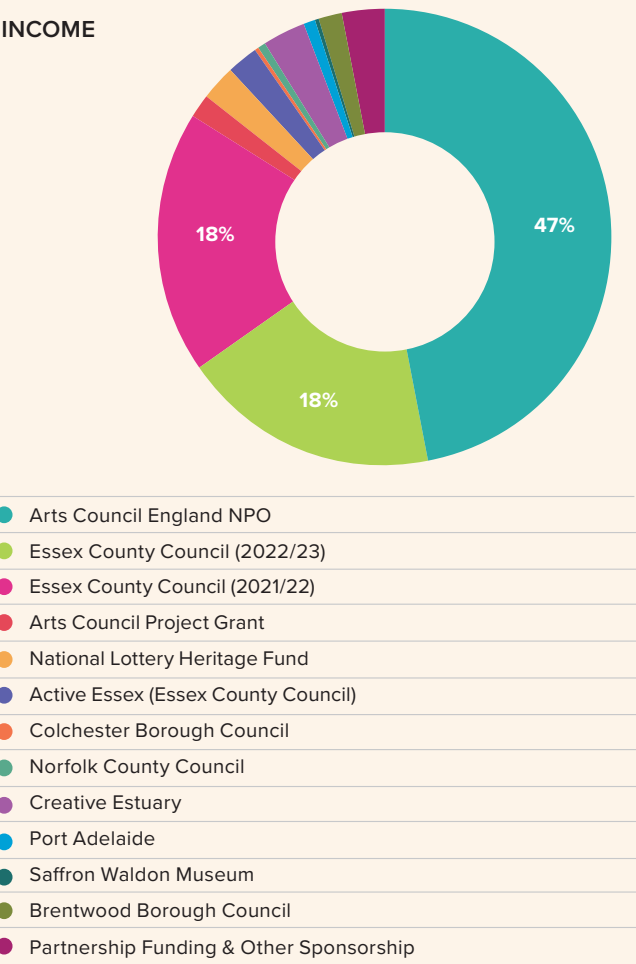
We also set aside a budget for research and development around *Global Village* and, as the travel limitations due to the pandemic lifted, we continued nurturing our wider geographical relationships in the UK, Dubai, Egypt and Australia.

Essex Cultural Diversity Project has retained its reserves at the same level as 21/22 equating to three months of operating costs.

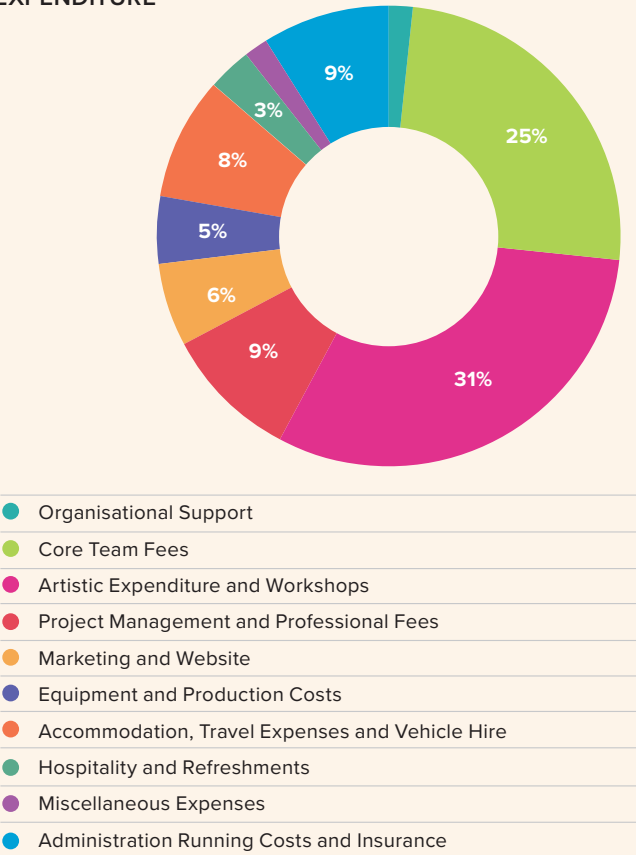
We also received support for our core programmes from Essex County Council, who will be funding us £60K a year over the next four years, to help us contribute in delivering the county’s core ambitions. Although this officially began last year in 2021/22, the first instalment was received in this financial year, which is reflected in the chart (on the right).

We have received the news that we have been successful in our next round of Arts Council England NPO for 2023 to 2026, which includes a £70K uplift per year. This will ensure further sustainability of the organisation and its ability to continue to deliver a varied programme and develop its work with diverse artists and communities.

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



Looking Forward to 2023/24
Indi Sandhu, Creative Director and CEO

At the start of 2023 we were delighted to be offered another three years funding as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO), as part of their 2023–26 Investment Programme.

Going forward, we are perfectly positioned to make a strong contribution to their *Let’s Create* strategic vision over the next few years, and build on the success of our last five years as an NPO.

Through our core programme and work with a wide range of diverse artists, communities and organisations, we have demonstrated a high level of reach and engagement, supporting the production of high-quality work which resonates with relevant issues and social challenges. Our work has had tangible benefits and impacts both at a strategic level, in terms of supporting organisations like the National Trust and Local Authorities to engage with diverse communities, and at a grassroots level through place-based projects and interventions.

In 2023/24 our work will continue to expand over the Eastern region, with projects not only in Essex, but also across Suffolk and Norfolk. We will also recruit two new freelance members to the team: a Community Engagement Lead and a Global Village Development Lead.

Our new Community Engagement Lead will help further our work towards the government’s *Levelling Up for Culture* ambitions across the East of England. The role will have a focus on direct support for community groups and organisations, and will help emerging diverse creative practitioners to develop programmes, outreach and promotion. The role will provide much-needed support to diverse communities that have potential and aspirations to develop their own cultural projects.

We will develop the *Global Village* brand and seek partnerships through another new part-time post, working with other festivals and cultural organisations as well as local partners to provide thousands of audiences across the region access to diverse cultural experiences, expanding the *Global Village* ‘family’ of diverse performers who will also require mentoring and support. Current plans include *Global Village* events in Castlepoint and other locations, and working with Brentwood Borough Council for a festival in Doddington, to connect to the story of Indian Princess in Essex who is buried at All Saints Church.

Already in place is a packed programme of *Artist Salons* and *Stand Up for Diversity* events for the forthcoming year, when we will continue to work with sector partners to platform talent and provide opportunities for diverse creative practitioners to develop their careers.

We will also provide opportunities for UK based diverse artists to work internationally through collaborations with the British Council, as well as working in partnership with our growing network of arts and heritage organisations across India, China, the Middle East and Europe.

The environment will be a strong theme for 2023/4, especially within our commissioning programme. There are projects planned for the coasts of Norfolk and Tendring, as well as Epping Forest in Essex. We aim to strengthen our partnership with the National Trust with a fourth commission, this time at Bourne Mill in Colchester, and we will once again work with Brentwood Borough Council, to explore community placemaking alongside environmental themes related to the new Dunton Hills Garden Village housing development.

Our *Festival of Thetford and Punjab* will continue with new opportunities for diverse artists to develop their work, and more international partnerships including Punjab Tourism and the Maharaja Duleep Singh Memorial Museum in Bassian Kothi, Punjab, India.

Throughout our programme, partnerships with local authorities, charities, environmental organisations, and arts and heritage organisations will enable us to unlock financial and capacity match, while also giving artists the opportunity to gain experience and engage new audiences, especially those that are currently under-represented.

essexcdp.com
info@essexcdp.com

Special thanks to
OUR CORE TEAM: Indi Sandhu, Creative Director and CEO | Giles Tofield, Strategic Lead | Jo Nancarrow, Digital & Admin Lead | Nicky Bettell, Finance Administrator

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OUR TRUSTEES: Miriam Stead (Chair) | Joanne Webb (Secretary) | David Guy (Treasurer) | Lora Aziz | Kerith Ririe | James Wenn | Simone Xue

Design by Creative Coop | creative.coop

"As an older minority ethnic woman living in rural Essex, ECDP has given me amazing opportunities to network and develop intercultural community events. An umbrella body to support emergent community groups and support initiatives, it is a valuable resource for us minority communities. Their events give me that opportunity, to meet, learn, enjoy as well as make connections" Community activist and ECDP event attendee

Essex Cultural Diversity Project Ltd
Company No. 07526344
Charity No. 1148729

Twitter @essex_cdp
Facebook @EssexCulturalDiversity
info@essexcdp.com
essexcdp.com

Back Image: Circus Raj performing at *Global Village*

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