**Arts Council England Tailored Review – Response on Behalf of the British Film Institute**

**About the British Film Institute**

In 2011 the BFI became the lead organisation for the screen industries in the UK. It is now a Government arm’s-length body and a distributor of Lottery funds for film.

Our mission is to ensure that film is central to our cultural life, in particular by supporting and nurturing the next generation of filmmakers and audiences. The BFI serves a public role which covers the cultural, creative and economic aspects of film in the UK.

It delivers this role:

* As the UK-wide organisation for the screen industries, a charity core-funded by government;
* By providing Lottery and government funds to support development, production and distribution of film across the UK and to help UK films gain international distribution;
* By managing the National Film & TV Archive and supporting a network of regional archives and film exhibition hubs;
* By working with partners to advance the position of the UK as an international centre of excellence for production of independent and studio films.

In October 2012, the BFI published ‘Film Forever, Supporting UK Film 2012-2017’, which set out its strategy for the next five years, following an extensive industry consultation. It described the activities underpinning the BFI’s three strategic priorities:

* Expanding education and learning opportunities and boosting audience choice across the UK;
* Supporting the future success of British film; and
* Unlocking film heritage for everyone in the UK to enjoy.

To that end, the BFI helps ensure that public policy supports film and, in particular, British film.

Founded in 1933, the BFI is a registered charity governed by Royal Charter. The BFI Board of Governors is chaired by Josh Berger.

**Arts Council England’s Position as a DCMS Non-Departmental Public Body**

The BFI has a broadly positive view of Arts Council England’s (ACE) work. As with the BFI, their constitution as an NDPB affords them the distance and independence to support, advocate for and represent the interests of the British cultural and artistic sectors. This is an area in which they have achieved admirable success. Between our own work and that of ACE we are confident that the whole breadth of culture, and all cultural practitioners, in the UK are offered significant opportunities to gain access to funding, support and leadership.

Although the BFI’s view is that our priorities, approach and focus are distinct from those of ACE, there is some crossover in the institutions and individuals supported by ACE and the BFI, both in terms of artistic projects and outputs and through community engagement and education. We are working together to ensure smooth and joined-up processes and to explore areas of shared delivery responsibility where appropriate. This work is being undertaken alongside the BFI’s development of a Strategic Plan for the 2017-2022 period.

**ACE’s Standing and Engagement and Influence with Stakeholders**

As a third party commentator, the BFI’s view is that ACE is a strong leader and advocate for those communities it represents. They have taken some strong steps in recent guidelines changes to push this responsibility down to their National Portfolio Organisations. Their drive to improve digital outcomes and local leadership are admirable, as is their commitment to create diverse arts leaders of the future.

The BFI would welcome them taking the next step by adopting our Diversity Standards (as applicable) in relation to their own funding programmes. These Standards are seen as driving a step change in terms of representation, themes and opportunity within the film industry and could readily be applied to other cultural media.

In some instances artists have been ‘clients’ of ACE before moving to film projects, some of which have been backed by the BFI. ACE’s support for ‘Artists Moving Image’, as distinct from narrative film projects, continues to be welcome and has helped support the development of some of the UK’s most important film makers.

**Efficiency & Effectiveness**

The BFI has chosen only to answer those questions where we feel we have sufficient experience of ACE’s work in this area to pass comment.

**How the Arts Council's priorities align with the government's priorities of ensuring the opportunities of arts and culture are available to everyone regardless of background and benefit communities across the country.**

In the BFI’s view ACE take their responsibilities on this front very seriously and have taken decisive, definitive action to foster opportunities and change. Their commitments to push funding beyond London, and to deliver cultural experiences in hard to reach places – including through the Creative People and Places programme – are admirable and are working.

The BFI has drawn from ACE’s experiences and expertise on this front as part of our 2017-2022 Strategic Plan process and we are keen to work with ACE, DCMS and others to ensure that film plays an important role in helping the Government deliver on this important commitment.

**The Arts Council’s role as development agency**

As noted above ACE plays a vital role in the broad cultural ecosystem, from their work offering opportunities to young people through to their support for working artists and cultural practitioners. The BFI has supported a number of film makers whose careers have been positively influenced by funding, support and work with ACE. We are grateful for their continued support in allowing talented artists – including those working with film as a medium – to flourish and find their voice.

**How the Arts Council advocates for the arts and culture**

This is one area where ACE has a well-earned reputation. They work closely and well with their NPO network to share the value of arts and culture in every community and with important stakeholders to amplify this in schools, in public and on the national and political stage.

Their message is the right one. Culture and the arts form a vital part of children’s education and are the wellspring of Britain’s economic wellbeing – the publicly subsidised and international money-spinning faces of our cultural industries are two sides of the same coin.

This is the same in film, where the BFI has supported the careers of many world renowned actors and film makers and lit the spark in the actors and film makers of the future.

**How the Arts Council innovates and how it plans for the future**

There are a number of areas where ACE leads the way in terms of innovation. First amongst these is data management and usage. ACE investment in data management systems for their NPO network has allowed them to make better decisions at both global and local level, to better target resources and deliver value for money. It is an area where the BFI and ACE are in conversation with a view to learning and best practice.

On the side of cultural innovation, ACE may be behind the curve in their support for new forms of visual media including virtual and altered reality and in their embracing of new private sector tech partnerships. Although some efforts have been made to work in this area (chiefly through ‘The Space’ bridge organisation) results have been mixed. We admire ACE’s continued commitment to new forms and ideas and are working with them on how we might better deliver together in this very specific, emerging area of work.