

Name of your Organisation:	Omnibus Theatre
Name of the project TFN funded:	Learning and Participation Programmes: Routes and Story Circle
Date Funded by TFN:	01/12/2020
Were you able to undertake your project as planned?	No
If no, please outline how the project has changed.	We were not able to run Kitchen Table, which was originally pitched at our application, as we had run out money funding two other projects: Routes and Story Circle.
Can you describe and/or demonstrate the specific impact that TFN funding has had against your initial objectives?	Since 2013 Omnibus Theatre has been driven by the legacy of our former library building to be remain a civic space for all. When the pandemic challenged that, we put community support at the forefront of our priorities. By reconfiguring finances, changing to hybrid working and modifying programmes to reduced capacity and online, we were determined not to lose the connection to our community. TFN funding allowed Omnibus to continue with our learning and participation projects, Routes and Story Circle, and maintain the link with our local community. We were able to carry on with these programmes and pay practitioners and staff fairly. Originally, Routes was solely in response to addressing food poverty in Lambeth, but as the pandemic progressed, we saw the toll it took on mental health, particularly on young people and thus the scope and impact of Routes changed. We became more aware of mental health issues and emphasised games and exercises that allowed children to connect, relive anxiety and enjoy themselves. With reduced numbers and within Covid guidelines, we held our Routes holiday programme in person in April, May and from July to August in 2021. Routes saw 8 to 11-year-olds, who receive free school meals, participate in drama workshops that culminated in a play. They received breakfast and lunch, relieving the pressure on families during half-term holidays. To enforce social distancing, the number of participants fell from 103 in 2020 to 69 in 2021. Following a successful pilot of Story Circle in 2020, we were able to continue with the project this year and our partnership Age UK. Story Circle ran March to May and June and July and provided weekly creative writing workshops over via Zoom for 32 people aged 60 and over in a bid to tackle isolation, loneliness, and PTSD in the elderly, which became more pronounced during the pandemic.

	However, we are unable to carry out the Kitchen Table project of women congregating weekly to connect over meals and share stories of food, culture and community. We ran a pilot of Kitchen Table last year but were unable to run a second iteration of the project as funds were depleted after being spent on Routes and Story Circle. We simply did not raise enough to support all three projects: Routes, Story Circle and Kitchen Table. Routes cost £4,695.50 to run three times (April, May and July to August) in 2021 and Story Circle cost £6,799.54 to run twice (March to May and June to July). In total Routes and Story Circle cost £11,495.04. As projected in our original application, Kitchen Table needed £10,009. The total cost to run all three projects, Routes, Story Circle and Kitchen Table would cost more than the £13,126.54 allocated by TFN. We prioritised Routes and spent more money on the project, running it three times in the year rather than the original one week projected, because we saw that the young people were in greater need of it and it benefitted them more. The remaining £1,631.96 from TFN's grant will be used as seed funding to part fund a future version of Kitchen Table. We measured the impact of Story Circle and Routes via feedback forms. For Routes 100% of parents and guardians said they would like their child to participate in the project again and 100% said they would recommend Routes to other parents. 93% of participants said they would like to return. For Story Circle, a participant said that they "enjoyed participating more and more as the week's goes by [sic]", while another said it was "a stimulating, thought-provoking, and enjoyable experience".
What portion of the project did TFN fund?	88%
How many direct beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	101
How many indirect beneficiaries did the TFN funded project reach?	250

TFN Impact Report

Were you able to leverage further funding as a result of TFN support?	No
If yes, how much were you able to raise?	
Did you receive any pro-bono support, volunteer offers or introductions as a result of the event?	No
If yes, please can you provide details of the support you received?	
Has the training you received from TFN better prepared you in pitching your organisation to potential funders?	Yes
Has TFN increased your capacity to raise further funds?	Yes
How important was TFN funding in helping you achieve your objectives?	We wouldn't have been able to achieve our objectives without TFN funding
Since presenting at TFN, has your organisation undergone any other significant changes?	Since presenting at TFN, Omnibus has gone through many changes in wake of the pandemic. We have steadily re-built our programming and hires after lockdown restrictions were eased, which has improved our finances. We also developed our learning and participation projects to greater serve our community. Audiences are steadily returning with reduced capacity shows within Covid guidelines. Our headcount has also increased from four to 16 as well as our pool of freelancers and practitioners. We have also made improvements to our building such as installing a preparation kitchen and bar in the Common Room. This has helped increase our commercial potential and more easily accommodate learning and participation programmes where meals are also provided, such as Routes and Kitchen Table, which take place in the Common Room.
Do you have any other comments or feedback on the experience of the TFN process?	The TFN process was brilliant and very informative. The grant application training provided by TFN greatly improved Omnibus' application and has influenced other grant applications.

Can you tell us any personal stories to highlight the value of the project?	For the October half-term session of Routes two siblings, who were newly arrived in the UK from Bolivia, were referred to us by a local charity, The Indoamerican Refugee Migrant Organisation, which serves the substantial Latin American population in south London. The children were recently enrolled at school and one sibling knew a few English words while the older sibling knew no English. In the first week, the children were withdrawn during the games and exercises and did not want to eat the food. Across the week, staff saw positive changes in their engagement as non-verbal games and activities were prioritised, and where this wasn't possible, Spanish translations of exercise sheets were used. By the end of fourth day, they had both significantly increased in confidence in performing, were keen to eat the food (and have seconds!) and were engaging more with children. In the final performance, they played a brilliant panda and a magnificent witch. In another such instance, a young person enjoyed their time in drama lessons during Routes so much that they were offered a place to be part of Omnibus' Young Company of drama students on an 100% bursary funded by us. A further illustration of the impact of Routes on children centres on a child who was disruptive when he came to Omnibus to take part in the project. He ripped paper used in exercises, refused to listen to instructions and did not want to work with other children on his first day of the programme. His foster mother pleaded for him to be given a second chance as normally at his school he would be sent home and would not have been allowed to return. We relented and he was given another opportunity to attend. The following day he was better behaved, friendlier with the other children and throughout the week there was a marked improvement in his behaviour. We adapted to his needs and were patient, which he had not experienced before. Routes was a safe place where he could get a second chance and emotional support.
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