

Business Plan: The Granada Gallery & Studios

Executive Summary:

The Granada Gallery & Studios is a community-focused arts hub and maker space in Maidstone, aimed at providing local artists and creatives with exhibition and studio spaces, fostering collaboration and networking, and supporting the wider community's engagement with the arts. The project aligns with the Arts and Culture Strategy and Economic Development Strategy which set out a desire to capitalise on the potential of the town centre through supporting our existing businesses and arts/cultural groups, while continuing to attract and retain new talent. This will contribute to Priority 5: Destination Maidstone Town Centre of the EDS and the specific action to support a thriving creative and cultural business base and visitor economy offer in Maidstone Town.

Mission Statement:

A vibrant Community Arts Hub and Maker Space to support the needs of the local creative economy, providing accessible opportunities for the community of Maidstone to engage with the arts. Contributing to our priority for a Thriving Place: A Borough that is open for business, attractive for visitors and is an enjoyable and prosperous place to live.

Objectives

- Establish an arts hub and maker space for the local community
- Secure high occupancy rates for the studios
- Secure regular bookings for the exhibition space and other hireable spaces to ensure there are regular events in the town centre
- Increase engagement in the arts through programmes, workshops and events
- Encourage entrepreneurship with events to connect creators with buyers, collaborators and other residents
- Work with local artists/creatives to run the venue and help them establish a charity / CIC with a view to taking over the venue as an independent organisation in the future
- Job creation – supporting creatives in the town centre

Products and Services:

Gallery/exhibition space: short hire periods, low cost, flexible

Studios for rent: variety of sizes, low rent, short term, opportunities for networking/collaboration

Flexible meeting/workshop space for hire

Regular programme of events and activities: affordable, accessible and varied

Business support (via the team at the Business Terrace) – see below

Incubator / start-ups (Studios 1 – 4):

Our policy will be these spaces are for 'start-up businesses' trading for less than 24 months prior to starting their tenancy.

Businesses can occupy an incubator unit for up to a maximum of two years, which will be split into 2x6 month licences, followed by a 12 month licence agreement.

Studios 5-7 will be at market rates for established businesses.

Business Support:

1. Arts, Culture and Events Officer to contact ED with prospective tenant details to arrange a business advisory session.
2. Start-up meets Economic Development's External Business advisor to run through their business idea and business plan.
3. Business advisor to advise MBC that the business start-up is as financially viable as can be checked as a start-up, the business idea is viable and is able to take on the liability of a licence agreement.
4. MBC agrees licence.
5. As the business grows, they can go back to the Business Advisor for additional support and guidance.
6. The business would automatically be invited to join Economic Development's business database for invites to future business networking events, available grants and business support workshops.

It is anticipated that between 30 – 40 jobs could be supported each year through the Studios. This is based on:

Studios 1 – 5 – max 10 people at any time (can accommodate up to 2 per unit)

Studio 6 – max 4 people

Studio 7 – max 6 people

Assuming each business takes a 6 month tenancy this would give a maximum of 20 people per 6 months/40 per year. However it's likely that some of the studios will be single-occupancy as artists/makers often work alone.

Start-ups will be supported for up to 2 years within the Incubator Studios, then they will either move into one of the market rate Studios (5 – 7) or be supported to move to more mainstream premises.

Target Market:

Market segment	Characteristics	Potential interest
Local artists/creatives	Living within the Borough of Maidstone Newly qualified or established artists looking for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a space to start-up or expand their practice• exhibition space• space to collaborate with and learn from others	Studio space Exhibition space Opportunities to collaborate, network with other creatives Learn/develop business skills
Community arts groups and organisations	Based in the borough Looking for rehearsal space / venue to carry out activities	Meeting/workshop space Opportunities to collaborate, network
Residents	Living in borough/adjoining areas Looking for cultural experiences and activities	Visiting the gallery Taking part in workshops, events and activities
Visitors	People visiting the area Looking for cultural experiences	Visiting the gallery Taking part in a workshop/ activity

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unique offer – nothing else like it in town • Lots of interest/support from the local creative community • Flexible exhibition space to allow for large or small shows; short term hire • Variety of studio sizes; short term lease • Town Centre location with good footfall to attract passers-by • Provides a focal point for arts events and activities in the town – dedicated space • Artist-in-residence to deliver a public engagement programme • Space for artists and creatives to network and collaborate • Support for local creative businesses; training; upskilling • Backed by the local authority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New proposition so will take time to build a 'community' • Size of venue limits what can be offered and how the space can be used • Funding - reliant on ACE funding to deliver the project • Loss of University for Creative Arts campus in Rochester means fewer arts/creative students in local area • No on-site café • No on-site parking
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential to engage a wider, more diverse audience in arts and creativity • Large creative sector in the borough • Growing population looking for cultural experiences • Mid Kent College plans for performing arts centre with commercial arm. Potential to link with/co-locate arts hub • Hub could become a catalyst to drive regeneration; improve wellbeing and promote pride in place • Potential to link with local café(s) to offer discounts to hirers/users of the Hub • Social prescribing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maidstone already has a network of link workers in place ○ Involve are actively engaging arts providers to deliver activities • Town Centre Strategy – shifting focus from retail only to more leisure/arts and hospitality uses • Potential to expand offering if more units become available (e.g. retail outlet, music venue, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of uptake of studio spaces • Lack of hirers for exhibition space • Commercial interest in the unit over-riding the community project • Competitors - Nucleus Arts now has several centres in Medway, could attract people away from Maidstone • Cost of living – impact on take up of studios, hireable spaces and workshops

Competitive Analysis:

There are no direct competitors in Maidstone

Nucleus Arts is the nearest competitor, with centres in Rochester, Chatham and Rainham. They are a well-established business (charity) with a loyal audience/clientele. They currently have a waiting list for studio space. Nucleus previously ran a similar facility (without studios) in Units 4-5 Granada House but moved out when business rates relief was stopped after they started running a café from the premises.

Maidstone Museum has an exhibition space but this is booked years in advance and is relatively expensive (especially for individual, emerging artists).

Art-K is a franchise business based in the Royal Star Arcade that offers art classes to adults and children. These are charged at commercial rates.

Unique Selling Proposition:

Professional exhibition space for short-term hire, low cost, and flexible.

Variety of studios for emerging artists, low rent, short term, with on-site exhibition space and opportunities for collaboration and networking, business support.

Varied programme of events and activities appealing to the wider community

Business Support for the creative sector utilising our already successful inhouse business terrace support

Legal Structure:

To be determined.

Organisational Structure:

Manager: Responsible for day-to-day operations, bookings, and studio contracts.

Artist-in-Residence: Responsible for developing and delivering a diverse programme of arts-based events for community engagement and assisting with day-to-day running

Marketing & Sales Strategy:

Channel	Action	Market Segment
Local press	Announce forthcoming launch of venue and what it offers	ALL
Direct mail	Email details of available studio spaces – sizes, costs, etc.	Local artists/creatives
Business Terrace e-newsletters	Include articles with details of studio spaces and contacts	Local artists/creatives
Kent County Council	Work with KCC to promote studio spaces to their networks	Local artists/creatives
Web listing on artiststudiofinder.org	List available studios – sizes, costs, etc	Local artists/creatives

Direct mail	Email details of hireable spaces including for exhibitions/workshops	Local artists/creatives Community arts groups
Facebook	Targeted posts to reach artists/creatives based in Maidstone and Kent	Local artists/creatives
Google Ads	Campaign to promote studios/exhibition space starting 2 months prior to opening	Local artists/creatives Community arts groups
Local press	Announce official opening of venue	Residents
Visit Maidstone website	List any events/activities planned on the 'What's On' pages	Residents/visitors
Visit Maidstone e-newsletters	Promote the Arts Hub and any events/activities planned	Residents/visitors
Facebook	Series of posts to promote venue	Residents / Visitors
Posters in venue windows	To promote the venue and what's happening there (exhibitions/events)	Residents / Visitors

Funding:

£45k from UKSPF

Up to £150k(?) available from s106

These funds will be used to cover the refurbishment and fit-out of the unit.

We will need to apply to Arts Council England (ACE) for a grant to support the Hub for a trial period (ACE will usually fund projects that last up to 3 years). This will help to cover running costs, including salaries, as well as materials and equipment to deliver a programme of public engagement events/activities.

ACE funding options

1. Project grant of up to £100,000. If we want to include any 'build' costs as part of this, we will need to contact ACE before submitting a full application.
2. Project grant of more than £100,001 – if the project doesn't relate to one of ACE's Strategic Strands then we must contact them first. The guidance states: "We want to make sure that a project of this size has the potential impact that we would expect before you invest time in developing a full application. We will also think about where we have budget available. We will confirm in writing whether you can apply."
3. Major Projects Strategic Strand - to be eligible for this, our application needs to:
 - Be for £100,001 or over. There is no maximum threshold for the fund.
 - Meet the ACE definition of a Major Project. A Major Project is defined as an ambitious, high-quality project that is likely to leave a legacy beyond its funded life.
 - Major Projects applications must be grounded in at least one Element of the Creative and Cultural Country Outcome of the ACE strategy. There are two Elements that might be relevant for our proposal:
 - Element Q: Giving more opportunities to people (especially those who are currently underrepresented) to start a professional career in the creative industries
 - Element R: Ensuring people (especially those who are currently underrepresented) have opportunities to sustain their careers and fulfil their potential in the creative industries.
4. Place Partnerships Strategic Strand – to be eligible for this, our application needs to:

- Be for £100,001 or over. There is no maximum threshold for the fund.
- Be for a strategic place-based intervention that is intended to make a long-term difference to the cultural or creative life of the local community;
- Make a clear step change in provision in that place where a relevant partnership exists to deliver the project
- Be informed by robust needs analysis and respond to relevant local strategies and
- Be led by a consortium of partners who are relevant to delivering the project

To apply for either the Major Projects or Place Partnerships Strands, we would need to submit an Expression of Interest in the first instance. If approved, we could then proceed to a full application.

Financial Projections:

Pending detailed financial information, projections will include income from space rentals, events, and potential grants, balanced against operating costs, salaries, and maintenance expenses.

Appendix:

Feasibility study – Creative Arts Hub Report by Retail Inspired