1. The Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, social and scientific interests. The purpose of the UK Branch in London is to bring about long-term improvements in wellbeing, particularly for the most vulnerable, by creating connections across boundaries (national borders, communities, disciplines and sectors) which deliver social, cultural and environmental value.

2. As part of this, we are currently conducting an Inquiry into the Civic Role of Arts Organisations. The Inquiry seeks to increase awareness of the valuable ‘civic role’ that arts organisations can and do play nationally and locally. By ‘arts organisations’, we refer to cultural organisations in a broader sense, including museums and other cultural institutions. We recently published our Phase 1 report, which includes case studies from 40 arts organisations in England and Wales that demonstrate good practice, and we are in the process of commissioning 40 more. We are now canvassing the sector for feedback, and scoping our Phase 2, which will involve supporting several local-based organisations to develop ‘next practice’.

3. We believe that the arts and arts organisations provide a unique offer for civic engagement, and are therefore responding to several of the questions asked in this Call for Evidence using the learning we have achieved to make the case for the importance of the arts in citizenship and civic engagement. Below, we respond to Questions 1, 7, 8, 10 and 12 with a specific focus on the role of the arts and culture.

**Question 1. What does citizenship and civic engagement mean in the 21st century? Why does it matter, and how does it relate to questions of identity?**

4. On an everyday scale, citizenship is about engaging in one’s communities – taking part in society, whether it be making conversation with a neighbour, buying something in a shop, or taking one’s children to school. Also, communities are not always geographical – people can engage with virtual communities digitally. Civic engagement is not always overtly political.

5. How people relate to, and interact with, their communities can be an important factor for their identity. It has impacts for mental and physical wellbeing, and can affect one’s feeling comfortable and welcome in their environment. This is important in a climate where people are becoming increasingly isolated and digital interactions are taking the place of community environments: in 2012, the Eurofound European Quality of Life Survey found that [10.6% of Brits reported feeling lonely more than half, most or all the time](https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/...). This is especially pertinent now, in a post-Brexit vote environment, where there were [record levels of hate crimes in the first three months after the EU referendum](https://www.gov.uk/...), and there are [significant concerns regarding social segregation in our society](https://www.gov.uk/...), with regard to ethnicity but also age and social class.
6. As well as allowing people to construct and express their individual identity, arts organisations allow people to connect with people who are different from them, tackling one of the key barriers to community cohesion. The arts can also provide an opportunity to connect with people who are similar to them, or going through similar life experiences as them (see Duckie). Engaging with different communities helps people to better understand themselves, in the context of other people, improves happiness and wellbeing on an individual and collective level.

7. Arts organisations can play a great placemaking role in the identity of an area or a community, building social capital and enabling cultural capital (see LIFT Tottenham and Grizedale for examples). The arts can improve aspirations on an individual and collective level, helping people to discover interests and talents. Additionally, arts organisations provide life skills to people throughout the life course: in particular, this can help to tackle inequalities of opportunity and improve social mobility.

8. On a different note, citizenship includes certain rights and responsibilities, one of which is political engagement. In our report, we make a comparison between some arts organisations and a ‘town hall’:

‘Art has always stimulated and reflected current debates about issues as diverse as human rights and strife between different generations based on wealth inequalities... Trust in organisations is waning and there is scepticism about experts... Arts organisations provide safe places for considering and debating difficult issues. They can present issues in their full complexity and give them a human texture. They can go further and mobilise campaigns.’

Rethinking Relationships, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (UK Branch): page 24

9. Importantly, the arts can be a valuable tool to bring the voices of people with marginalised identities, particularly people with protected characteristics, to society.

Question 7. How can society support civic engagement? What responsibility should the government, devolved and local governments, third sector organisations and the individual have for encouraging civic engagement? What can the Government and Parliament do to support civil society initiatives to increase civic engagement?

10. We believe that civil society and civic engagement can be improved through arts organisations working on a local scale, bringing all people within a community together, and working to bridge different communities. At a time of reduced public funding, we believe it is vital that partnerships
between the civic and the civil are strengthened, so that communities are able to build their social capital and develop their cultural capital by shaping the arts and culture of their area.

11. In many areas, arts and culture provision supported by local authorities have suffered severe cuts. These cuts reveal two issues: that the arts need to be more open and relevant to society by enabling communities to shape culture; and that there is a lack of understanding of the value of the arts and culture by decision-makers. For more information on the value of the arts, see pages 12-14 of our report.

12. In our Phase 1 report, we identify a number of barriers to and levers for change with regard to arts organisations developing their civic role. We believe that the role of local and national government is both a funding and a convening role.

13. We have made two core observations regarding funding:

- there is a reliance on one-off project support (rather than long-term organisational commitments)
- there is a lack of deeper understanding of the funding ecology of the arts, and how different funding streams working conjunction with one another.

14. Going forward, we intend to further investigate the funding ecology of the arts, and expect to be able to make more concrete recommendations for both national and local government, and the third sector.

15. On a local scale, the role of local authorities has a great impact on the success and development of arts and cultural services in a community, and there are notable examples of inspirational practice, including the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham Cultural Education Partnership. Barking & Dagenham has significant levels of hardship, and a growing number of early years and school age children. Recognising the benefits of cultural education, the council seeks to improve the attainment of and opportunities for young people in the borough through investing in a collaboration with local schools, to embed cultural education and creative learning in the curriculum. LBBD is also investing in the arts and culture elsewhere in the borough, seeking to attract investment and cultural enterprise, to improve the community by becoming a ‘Creative Hub’. A devolved government approach, when implemented well, can enable local people to communicate what support and resources they need.
16. Part of the LBBD Cultural Education Partnership involves an investment in the development of leaders in the sector. This also emerged as a key ask of the sector through our Inquiry. Advocates for this approach are over-stretched and under-supported, yet they are the change-makers. These leaders require support to be able to think strategically and improve their capacity, or risk burn-out. In addition, the sector needs to be able to identify and support more diverse leaders, to combat the persistent norm of white, middle-class men.

17. The King’s College London report *Towards Cultural Democracy* makes a number of recommendations for national government, see here.

**Question 8.** What are the values that all of us who live in Britain should share and support? Can you identify any threats to these values, which affect the citizenship of, for instance, women or various minority groups? If so, how can their citizenship be strengthened?

18. The value of creativity is often overlooked, but is central to British identity; a tenet of our economy, our culture and our national community. Creativity leads to innovation, and is essential to problem-solving and entrepreneurship. This is vital as the UK tries to capitalise on our tertiary sector economy and prosper after Brexit, to support our economy and secure our new place on the world stage.

19. King’s College London identifies that there is a ‘plethora of creativity’ throughout the UK, much of which is not directly publicly funded nor commercially profitable, including a great amount that is ‘invisible’ to cultural policy and cultural organisations. For example, breakdancing in a shopping mall with friends would be hidden to cultural organisations.

20. Strong proponents of the value of creativity are Ben Payne and Lucy McNab, who founded the Ministry of Stories in 2010. The Ministry works to champion literacy in 3 of London’s poorest boroughs, as Payne explains, “in the broader sense of literacy: that understanding that being able to write yourself into the world is a key skill, an important part of living a good life”.

21. In addition to the intrinsic value of creativity, a creative education can have significant impacts on opportunities in life. The Cultural Learning Alliance found that participation in structured arts activities can increase cognitive abilities by 17%, improve attainment in Maths and English, and improve students’ employability and likelihood of staying in employment. Cultural education, therefore, is an important tool for social mobility and ensuring equal opportunities. We are beginning to see evidence that the recent cuts to arts and cultural funding have been greatly
detrimental. For example, DCMS reported that participation in arts activities music activities in schools dropped from 55.3% to 37.2% between 2009 and 2013/14. The arts have historically been a middle- and upper-class pursuit, because they require funds, and present cuts threaten to reverse the lengths that have been made to disrupt this.

**Question 10. How do you see the relationship between citizenship and civic engagement on the one hand and social cohesion and integration on the other? What effect does the level of diversity in schools and workplaces have on integration in society as a whole? How can diversity and integration be increased concurrently?**

22. We are responding only to the first part of Question 10, as the second and third questions are not within our remit.

23. Using the arts as an example of civic engagement, arts programmes that bring everyone in a community together can provide an opportunity to improve social cohesion by directly combatting the social segregation that creates disharmony and othering. A key example of this is Entelechy Arts, who bring together people who wouldn’t ordinarily meet, let alone share a stage, such as elderly people and people with multiple disabilities. Arts projects, such as the performances that Entelechy Arts create, bring people together with a common purpose; co-creating can be used as a tool to improve relationships and communication.

24. We recognise the important role that arts organisations can play in placemaking – in particular, through harnessing the full range of assets (including communities, arts, local authority, social sector, and business) in an area to shape its future (see Derby Museums, Hull Freedom Festival).

25. In addition, arts organisations can create a space where people can understand difference in views through the arts: this is part of their role as a ‘town hall’, as discussed in response to Question 1. For some, this occurs on a person-to-person basis. Some address this political role directly, such as the National Theatre’s National Debates programme. Arts organisations are uniquely valuable as a convenor of relationships, skilled at bringing together different sectors and parts of society.

**Question 12. Can you give examples of initiatives and role models that have helped promote a positive vision of British Citizenship within a tolerant and cohesive society?**
From our case studies:

**Fun Palaces**

26. Fun Palaces is an ongoing campaign to instil culture at the heart of every community, which includes an annual weekend of action focused around arts, science, tech and craft events run by and for local people. Our case study interview with Carine Osmont and Alexandre Mendonca, who have curated three Fun Palaces in Farnham, highlights the value of getting to know your neighbours and feeling comfortable in your local community; particularly to them as immigrants. See civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/resources/fun-palaces.

**Duckie**

27. Duckie’s goal is to make entertainment for ‘ordinary people’, having grown from a weekly gay club night started in 1995 to an organisation staging social events, performances and workshops across the UK. The group responds to the identified lack of suitable and stimulating entertainment for marginalised people – working class people, LGBTQ+ people, ethnic minorities, drug and alcohol addicts, homeless people – improving wellbeing and building relationships and communities. For example, Duckie run The Posh Club, a risqué cabaret/afternoon tea for working-class elderly people from mixed ethnic communities and lower-socio-economic backgrounds: ‘[We] try to make the party for the people that don’t necessarily have the parties. We want to have fun and bring groups of people together.’ See civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/resources/duckie.

**mima**

28. Middlesbrough Institute for Modern Art (mima) strives to bring people into the gallery, to break down the perceived elitism of the art world, and other barriers that prevent people from accessing the arts. The gallery makes efforts to work closely with different community groups, not only to create exhibitions and give them a voice, but also to help develop sustainable resources for everyday use. For example, building an exhibition with local refugees led to the co-development of a regular programme, offering a weekly free meal, a food bank, free internet access, bespoke ESOL classes, clubs including crafts, film and gardening, and more. See civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/resources/mima.

**Hull Freedom Festival**

29. The Hull Freedom Festival began as a commemoration of the bicentenary of the Anti-Slavery Act in 2007, and has grown into a vibrant annual festival. The Festival has an important role in the regeneration of Hull City Centre, and played a key part in Hull winning 2017 City of Culture. Mikey Martins, artistic director and CEO, explains, ‘[it’s] pulling the city back together: you’re seeing a lot
more people hanging out in the centre of Hull and very proud of their city centre and all the redevelopment that’s happened. It’s brought the city centre to life’. See civicroleartsinquiry.gulbenkian.org.uk/resources/hulls-freedom-festival.

From elsewhere in the sector:

Creative People and Places

30. CPP is an action research programme run by Arts Council England that seeks to bring the arts to areas where people have had fewer opportunities to engage. The programme involves funding and developing radically different approaches to improve participation at a local level, and includes a significant focus on partnership working, bringing together artists and local people. See www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/. Projects include Creative Black Country, a three-year campaign which aims to make the most of creative talent in the Black Country. Examples of their work include the Desi Pubs project: celebrating the ‘East meets West story’ of British Asians’ reinvention of the English pub. See www.creativeblackcountry.co.uk/projects/desi-pubs/.

Get Creative

31. Get Creative is an initiative which celebrates and supports everyday creativity in and around homes and public spaces, from guerrilla gardening to acrobatics to storytelling. The programme is supported by a consortium of organisations – see a full list here: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3P7n390cZc3VBPn7cPn0F5T/about-get-creative. For examples, see here: www.bbc.co.uk/arts/sections/get-creative.

8 September 2017