



REVISED BUSINESS PLAN

2021 - 2022

(March 2021)



White Pariahs R&D 2019 - Photo by Rehan Jamil

Image description: Photo of a blonde white woman and a dark hair black man tenderly each other against a black background. The woman's face does not show

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Welcome

I am honoured and excited to be taking over the helm of Vital Xposure from the company's founder, Julie M^cNamara, who created a company with 'beautiful bones', focusing on hidden stories and social justice.

I must now take forward this significant inheritance and, with clear articulation, deliver Vital Xposure's future, albeit at a time when theatre is reeling to recover from COVID-19 and, as a disabled-led theatre company, we are facing many additional challenges.

Disabled peoples' roles within the wider arts sector continue to be a challenge. How are we to be respected for artistic merit rather than patronised for our medicalised life story?

How will we tell our stories; what model will prove resilient; how will we serve our audience and how will we innovate, ensuring we not only survive, but thrive?

My response is for a theatre company that would make Brecht proud, making work that interrogates the personal/political, the notion of social justice, which explores our social relationships and is led by disabled people. We will articulate this response within the "Let's Create" framework, which plays to Vital Xposure's strengths, particularly Inclusivity & Relevance and Ambition & Quality. Further, we will employ the Social Model of Disability toolkit to not only serve access needs, but to creatively expand and fertilise theatre making.

One of the foundational cornerstones of Vital Xposure's work is the finding of hidden stories. In the coming year, we will begin to interrogate how and why stories become hidden and explore new means to aid their discovery. The forces that silence disabled voices also silence many others, and Vital Xposure's trademark intersectional approach is ideally placed to take the pulse of our times and release these essential narratives.

To this end, Vital Xposure will become home to a community of citizen investigative journalists and politically engaged artists, gathering stories to feed both Vital Xposure's theatre making processes and those of the wider sector. We will be central to debate and will stand proud and loud in theatres, non-theatres and digital spaces - a theatrical embodiment of the energy of a twitter feed, looking deep and long and high at the tides of our society. Our role is to listen, to spark and curate debate, to find hidden stories which reflect our communities, and which are performed by those who have been hidden by mainstream assumptions.

We are a new writing company developing new stories. In the first instance we will work with and grow disabled writers, creating an ecology of development and connection to give our artists sustainable careers. Once we have piloted our approach, we will reach out to other artists who face barriers of misrepresentation and prejudice, pioneering an intersectional development process. These artists will be shared within the wider theatre sector, but will always have a home at Vital Xposure.

This business plan lays out the first steps towards the company we wish to build over the next five years.

1. We will have a clear identity: The home of political theatre, led by disabled people, but for everyone.
2. We will enmesh ourselves deeper within the community fabric of London & Hackney. Using our accessible grassroots theatre, we will make work based around the notion of theatre activism and participant story gathering.

3. We will seek a diverse resilient funding structure. Touring one show every 18 months is not enough to do the job in hand. We will undertake sector development, community development, artist development and join them up cohesively, creating a bigger company. We will seek to expand our funding base and find new partners to increase the scale and frequency of our productions and exposure of our artists.
4. We will share our processes widely. Using our knowledge, our creative access toolkit, our real and symbolic integrity, we will make universal theatre for all.
5. We will be a more connected company. With a support network of regional venues we will develop disabled artists to their full potential for them to build sustainable careers. For every project we make, we will ask how we can amplify its impact with the help of others.
6. We will diversify the heritage of the artists we work with. We will explore, with our Board, ways to improve participation in our work, particularly those who are disadvantaged, by enhancing their opportunities, enabling access to resources, profiling voices and respecting individuals' rights. We recognise our intersectional approach to theatre-making requires robust connection with all communities.

We will be proud and political, buzzing with the creative energy of the artists and community we work with. We strive to be the go-to disabled theatre company in the UK, and with our breadth of vision and significant projects, enable the company to thrive.

This business plan marks the beginning of this journey.

Simon Startin - Artistic Director, Vital Xposure

Vision, Mission, Values and Aims

Vision

To share previously hidden stories with new audiences informed by a creative and inclusive aesthetic through showcasing the talent of disabled artists

Mission

To create exciting, innovative theatrical experiences for audiences, artists and communities alike. All work presents an inclusive experience where creative tools will both illuminate its meaning and serve the access needs of our audiences and artists.

Values

- Social justice
- Excellence
- Integrity
- Inclusive practices
- Creative collaborations

Aims

- To engage hidden voices with extraordinary stories to tell, often existing on the periphery of our communities
- To create highly visual new work, blending strong imagery with a provocative literary narrative
- To produce work that challenges common assumptions and inequality
- To place access at the heart of our work
- To push boundaries, opening new ways of engagement with the arts
- To collaborate with partners nationally and internationally, as appropriate.

Key Achievements from Vital Xposure's first decade

Since the company's formation in 2011 by founding Artistic Director, Julie M^cNamara, Vital Xposure has made and produced original work, diverse in scale, subject and medium, highlighting stories from hidden voices and communities, including: ***Let Me Stay*** - the impact of Alzheimer's on family relations, which in 2014 -15 toured nationally and internationally; ***The Disappearance of Dorothy Lawrence***, exploring how society has treated women not conforming to social norms; ***The Knitting Circle*** and its linked film, ***Voices from the Knitting Circle***, focusing on experiences of people who survived the long stay asylums, closed in the 1980s. ***The Butch Monologues***, highlighting the lives and experiences of butches, masculine women and gender rebels living worldwide, through powerful and humorous stories exploring sexuality, vulnerability and desire. This production was originally developed with The Drakes and Hot Pencil Press and reached national and international audiences through tours between 2017-2019 and at events including Homotopia, Liverpool, Women of the World festival at the Southbank Centre in 2018 and Sydney Mardi Gras, Australia in 2019.

Our work is grounded by in-depth research, with each production informed by several periods of research and development, enabling each piece to evolve and ensuring access is embedded from the beginning of each production. An example of this was Julie M^cNamara's work on the ***Exceptional and Extraordinary: Unruly Minds and Bodies in the Medical Museum*** project in 2015 - 16, supported by the Research Centre for Museums and Galleries, University of Leicester. In collaboration with experts in medical history, disability and museums, M^cNamara was invited to explore behind the scenes of eight of the UK's most renowned medical museums. This led to the development of a one act play by M^cNamara, ***Hold the Hearse!***, a theatrical and humorous journey from the perspective of Mad Mary and Walter Riddle, two characters who evade 'the specimen collectors', which toured to five museums, engaging many non-arts attendees.

M^cNamara's one act play was developed further and paired with a new one act play from Omikemi, exploring the contemporary experiences of the mental health system by women of African heritage, unravelling a hidden story of unethical medical experimentation and exploitation. Vital Xposure supported Omikemi's first foray into writing for the stage with script development and mentoring. ***Medicine's Monstrous Daughters***, was on the brink of opening its national tour to 7 venues, when, in March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic saw the closure of UK arts venues.

In addition to M^cNamara's original museum research, was the creation of Pullen's Puppet, a 4 metre high puppet. In 2017 - 18 Vital Xposure developed a partnership with Emergency Exit Arts with a Liberty Festival commission for the Olympic Park. ***Pullen's Party*** was Vital Xposure's first outdoor arts event, collaborating with Access All Areas, a company specialising in working with performers with learning disabilities.

Our Ambitions for this year

2021 - 22 is an important transitional year for Vital Xposure, building on Julie M^cNamara's innovative work. This period marks the 'laying of the cables' for the company we want to be in five years' time. We will create:

1. **New Leadership** – Support the 'bedding in' of our new Artistic Director, Simon Startin, who has been leading change for disabled artists for over 26 years. Many improvements in the employment of disabled performers now seen in the theatre sector, particularly at the RNT and RSC, have been due to his work as an artist and activist. Leading an ACE National

Portfolio Organisation (NPO) is a first for Simon and, in his first year, we recognise the need to clearly articulate his vision and raise his profile and that of Vital Xposure.

2. **New Partnerships** – with Simon’s arrival, we are in an exciting transitional phase and are actively seeking new partners. Capitalising on renewed interest in disabled work driven by ACE’s “Let’s Create” strategy, we are building strategic partnerships with selected regional venues with the express aim of developing disabled artists. We have already started conversations, gaining interest from Arts at the Old Fire Station (Oxford); Wolverhampton Arena; Theatre Royal, Plymouth, Wiltshire Creative and Oldham Coliseum. The partnerships will build the foundations for the ‘Pipeline’ project that will form a compelling component of our 2022 NPO application.
3. **New Methods** – part of our ambition is an expanded participatory offer. Inspired by Simon’s work with London Bubble, we will democratise Vital Xposure’s story curation by building a cohort of disabled Citizen Investigative Journalists who will interrogate how social justice issues can be used as a catalyst for theatre making. We will collaborate with participatory groups from other organisations to explore this new model of working.
4. **New Work – *White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels*** in collaboration with Dervish Productions will aim to re-build our touring network. The impact of COVID-19 on the theatre sector and particularly on touring, is unknown. Our ambition is to tour a residency model to 3 regional theatres from June 2022 for a minimum of 1 week at each venue. From Spring 2022 we will work with young people of 13+ to develop a participatory element and support the audience development for live engagement. Furthermore, the creation of a Young Historian’s Project, curating communities’ stories will inform an accessible digital learning resource.
5. **Build on innovation** – continuing the legacy of Julie M^cNamara’s exploration of intersectional theatre and how we can bring diverse communities together, we will innovate in form and content, curate debate and facilitate collaboration to bring about social justice and community cohesion.

Context, Community and the External Environment

The ongoing pandemic has hit our sector hard; particularly our disabled artists. With increased susceptibility to COVID-19, many have been forced to shield with little financial or emotional support.

Furthermore, austerity over the last 10 years has seen the government sacrifice many disabled lives in the name of economic probity. With the political language of ‘vulnerability’, ‘underlying conditions’ and ‘Do Not Resuscitate’ notices, this horrendous onslaught continues apace.

There is need now, more than ever, to bring hope and opportunity to disabled communities.

Vital Xposure is driven by this need and the urgency to reframe the narrative our society employs around disability. With the appointment of Simon Startin as Artistic Director, Vital Xposure sees itself being at the forefront of the strategic necessity for theatres nationally to programme disabled work and to give every opportunity to disabled artists to survive and thrive in the post COVID-19 landscape. There has never been a more important time for society to hear disabled artists’ voices, who have been living at the sharp end of human fragility and resilience, long before the rest of the world woke up to it.

There are two strategic opportunities.

1. **Structural opportunity.**

COVID-19 has laid waste to business as usual. In our conversations with the sector Vital Xposure is discovering a new openness to organisations changing the way they work with disabled artists. Furthermore, disabled people are equipped with the tools required to create work in these times. The disability aesthetic is founded on adaptability, discovering new forms and a willingness to question received wisdom. The negotiation of barriers and transforming them into artistic potentials is at the heart of our work. This knowledge and strength is vital to the post-COVID recovery, with its ongoing virus transmission and a growing population of artists with long-COVID.

2. **Narrative opportunity**

Within this 'ground zero' landscape a space for disabled leadership has been created, to rewrite the rule book on the role of disabled people within our culture. Given the skills disabled artists' possess for navigating flexible working processes, inclusive theatre forms and a lived experience of resilience and fragility, they should no longer be viewed as the erstwhile excluded, but as a formidable reservoir of talent and knowledge, central to our society, providing the opportunity for disabled leadership to inform a new cultural model. This could lead to a new narrative around the perception of disabled people; 'flipping the telescope' from grateful recipients of inclusion to energised cultural leaders paving the way for the whole of society.

This business plan stands as a response to these two opportunities and the urgent need for Vital Xposure's work within the cultural recovery.

Artistic Programme 2021 – 2022

White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels

In collaboration with Dervish Productions, White Pariahs re-tells the hidden stories of white working-class women who crossed the colour line to forge relationships with men and women of the Windrush generation. In partnership with Soul City Arts, two previous R&D's were held in 2019 and 2020. The Creative Team of Julie M^cNamara, Hassan Mahamdallie, writers/directors, Jeanefer Jean-Charles, movement director and Mohammed Ali, Digital Arts Director, Soul City Arts, have now been joined by Stephen Rudder, film-maker, and Awate, musician/composer, who have been undertaking early research into the photographic, filmic and musical soundscape for the production. With the completion of the first draft of the script by M^cNamara and Mahamdallie in March 2021, a further R&D will be held in Summer 2021 to bring together the artistic components of the production. Hakim Adi, Professor of History of Africa and the African Diaspora at Chichester University, will support the development of online resources for young people, with a Young Historian's project.

Participatory work with young people in Spring 2022 with partner venues in London, Coventry and Birmingham will build a residency model for the live production to be presented from June 2022, with the opportunity of further touring from Autumn 2022. If COVID-19 restrictions prevent live touring, a digital offering will be explored, building on the R&D, Summer 2020.

OUTCOME: A successful multi venue tour, with high impact outreach programme for schools, exploring the origin stories of multi-racial Britain.

Pipeline

A new artist development programme to provide the very best support for disabled artists with a network of regional venues will form the thrust of our 2022 NPO application. For too long disabled artists have been kept in a state of perpetual emergence, hemmed in by kind words and strategic weakness. We are already in talks with several regional venues to begin this exploration. In June/July 2021 we will curate a series of 'Tea and Cake' conversations between venues and experienced disabled artists to drill down into the blockages that limit disabled careers in the theatre sector. From these learnings we will build the 'Pipeline' project to deliver a state of the art programme, offering long term support to disabled artists, as a strategic answer to the current 'Do them and dump them' model that keeps our work out of mainstream culture.

OUTCOME: Five curated online 'Tea and Cake' conversations with disabled artists and organisation leaders. A diagnosis of the sector's barriers in developing disabled artists and getting their work onto mainstream stages. Partnerships formed with 3 or 4 regional venues will inform the 'Pipeline' project to develop a cohort of disabled artists over the next 4 to 5 years.

COVID Uncovered

This project is an exploration of a participatory offer that could feed Vital Xposure's work. In partnership with media platforms, we will be recruiting, training and empowering a cohort of disabled Citizen Journalists to investigate our communities' experiences of living through the pandemic. Beginning with a series of masterclasses with professional journalists (including the award winning [Ian Birrell](#) and Bibi Van Der Zee from The Guardian), our Vital Xposure's journalists will work with a professional editor to uncover the stories from a disabled perspective to be published online. We will be looking to form a partnership with Hackney Empire's participatory theatre groups to discover the potential for making theatre with these stories, from both an artistic and wellbeing perspective.

OUTCOMES: A detailed online exposé of Britain in a time of COVID-19, creating an ongoing resource informing Vital Xposure's theatre work and the wider sectors. A skilled and engaged group of Citizen Journalists, committed to further investigations with Vital Xposure. A burgeoning collaboration with Hackney Empire's participatory theatre making groups.

Wellspring

With secured funding from the City Bridge Trust, Wellspring is a rolling professional development project for disabled playwrights in London, providing the technical skills and improved professional networks to pursue a sustainable writing career. The project is to be carried out digitally to aid accessibility to disabled people and protect against COVID-19. Over the next 3 years we will:

1. Develop 16 disabled writers through masterclasses and mentoring, to each produce a first draft of an original script, to be showcased to peers and industry individuals.
2. Significantly improve the strength of the writers' professional networks within the London theatre sector, increasing employment prospects, career progression and sustainability. Two writers will be taken to full professional commission within Vital Xposure's artistic development cycle.
3. Improve the organisational structures within participating London theatre organisations to remove access and attitudinal barriers to disabled work appearing on London stages.
4. Undertake 3 organisational consultations with London theatre organisations to identify barriers that prevent disabled artists' development process.

OUTCOMES: For 2021-22, we will

- recruit 8 London based disabled writers,
- deliver 8 masterclasses/industry meeting events,
- have 8 new scripts written to first draft in mentoring partnership with 3 to 4 London theatre organisations.
- Deliver a digital showcase
- Select one of the writers for the first full professional commission in this project

2021 - 2022		
White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels	Summer 2021	R&D (collaboration with Dervish)
Wellspring: Writers development project	From April 2021	3 year project Supported by City Bridge Trust
COVID Uncovered: Community Journalism Project	September 2021	
Pipeline: laying the foundations for a new artist development programme	Throughout 2021	

Governance

The Board

The Board of Trustees is Vital Xposure's governing body, who also act as Company Directors and which is legally accountable for the company. The six Trustees act as ambassadors for Vital Xposure and are committed to upholding the company's values. They reflect the diversity of our society with regard to gender, experience of disability, ethnic, cultural and/or socio-economic background.

In 2021- 2022 we will work with Trustees towards our business development, agility and sustainability post-COVID, focusing on:

- a) Revisiting our vision and mission statements in light of our new artistic leadership. With Simon Startin's new ideas and opportunities, we will ensure these statements remain reflective and responsive. We will be undertaking this work at the beginning of the year (2021 - 22), initially through a board away day.
- b) defining Vital Xposure's position and role in inclusive theatre-making
- c) familiarisation with ACE's Let's Create Strategy and Investment Principles and to focus on how we can further improve our engagement with the Inclusivity & Relevance strand.
- d) strengthening our engagement with and offer to disabled artists / leaders
- e) creating a fundraising strategy to increase and diversify income
- f) establishing an evaluation framework to record and monitor our impact on an ongoing basis

Each of the quarterly Board meetings will include a section on organisational development. The specific items/questions under this section will be tailored as we move forward in order to suit and reflect progress. The starting point (March 2021 Board Meeting) will be a discussion and shared understanding of how our plans respond to the **Context and Community** (see above) and meet our stakeholders' expectations (funders, public and communities).

What would success look like?

- A clearly articulated reframing of our vision and mission reflecting Simon's new artistic leadership
- Fundraising plan and activity in place
- Appoint one high profile individual as Patron
- Recruit 1 new Trustee, a leading voice in Disability Arts
- Vital Xposure recognised as a good example of business development post-COVID

Staff

Vital Xposure comprises a team of three part-time staff members: the Artistic Director, Executive Director and General Manager, supported by an associate freelance consultant. Each member of the team has a strong background and professional knowledge in theatre, disability arts and the charity sectors.

The appointment of our new Artistic Director, Simon Startin, reinforces our commitment to social justice and democratizing theatre-making processes. We will establish an ongoing process of actively involving disabled individuals to search and present stories that matter to them and their communities (see **Artistic Programme: Community Journalism and Communications, Marketing and Audience Development**).

Simon's professional career as a trained disabled actor and playwright will expand Vital Xposure's offer to disabled theatre professionals and the ability to forge relationships with venues who are looking to make their training programmes, casting and commissioning procedures more inclusive and representative of disabled narratives. (see Artistic Programme: Playwrights Course).

What would success look like?

- 28 new disabled and non-disabled creative professionals engaging with VX
- 33 new disabled artists participating in VX's new theatre-making / story-collection activities
- 2 high profile media partners joining and/or working with VX

See also: **Engagement and Community**

ACE Investment Principles No: 1, 2, 3, 4

ACE Let's Create Outcomes: 1, 2, 3

Creative Media and Content

In 2020 we expanded our following across social media platforms and the online channels we use to engage with audiences. We will continue to increase our digital reach by extending our 'participatory theatre-making' process to support how we create and share new online content (see Communications – TARGET GROUP 1)

Every project will include audio-visual content, such as videos and podcasts, which will be available via our website. The content will be made accessible through integrated captions, transcripts and audio description as required. It will be used for marketing purposes as well as to create digital versions of the stories we will be collecting and sharing (see Artistic Programme: Community Journalism, White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels). Website visitors and social media followers will be actively encouraged to respond to the content, sharing thoughts on the subject matter and offering feedback on its accessibility.

Our focus will be on creating a Digital Engagement Plan for meaningful engagement with online audiences. This will include:

- a) quarterly articles on our website's blog to reflect on current developments in theatre and disability arts
- b) five online discussion panel events (Tea and Cake) to explore issues affecting disabled artists, with shared learning and advice

(see also: **Communications, Marketing and Audience Development**)

In each of the above we will monitor progress through quantitative data (numbers of participants per event, new followers and followers interacting with the content) and, mostly qualitative data (responses, comments, feedback).

What would success look like?

- 100 participants (20 per 'Tea and Cake' session)
- 3 presentations by the Artistic Director at industry events
- 3 accessible videos with recordings of the Tea and Cake sessions
- A Digital Engagement Plan, agreed by the team and the Board (in place by January 2022)

ACE Investment Principles No: 1, 2, 3

ACE Let's Create Outcomes: 1, 2

Communications, Marketing and Audience Development

We continue to develop a communications strategy (agreed in late 2018) to increase the company's profile and engagement with stakeholders. The two objectives of the strategy are:

- connection and engagement with individuals, audiences and disabled creatives
- forging relationships with industry peers, theatres and disability arts organisations

The focus of our communications is to participate in and nurture dialogue around themes relevant to our work and current social developments. We will also communicate updates on our activities and actively encourage people to take part and contribute their thoughts and feedback. For every project and production, activity is underpinned by a detailed media and audience development plan designed in close collaboration with Jane Morgan Associates, a leading specialist arts marketing agency. This will be linked to and part of the **Digital Engagement Plan** (see above), which will be one of the components of the developing Communications Strategy.

TARGET GROUP 1: Disabled Audiences / Disabled Creatives

In 2021 - 22 we will review and test new tactics to increase interaction, primarily online / digitally. We will achieve this by:

- a) quarterly blogs: reflections and provocations on selected topics. These will be shared via our social media channels and actively ask audiences to respond, contribute or challenge.
- b) group discussions: 5 online events (Tea and Cake) with disabled creatives and industry / theatre representatives to offer sector support and listen to their needs, towards building bridges between artists and organisations. These will enable us to monitor our work on an ongoing basis, ensuring it remains relevant to our audiences and continues to present new, untold stories.

The content for the above will be curated based on current developments, issues on social justice, access and fair representation in the arts.

Our data indicate that the profile of our audiences is White / British female between the ages of 50-64 years old (2019/2021 and 2020/2021). Although we have been engaging with wider segments of our communities since 2011, with distinct and/or multi-faceted gender / age/ ethnic profiles, we must acknowledge and address what recent data demonstrates: there is a gap in how our audience data reflects our society's diversity and individuals / groups who have been under- or mis-represented in the arts.

Our definition of disabled audiences falls under the Social Model of Disability, acknowledging that individuals have ownership of their multi-layered identity and terms to describe it. We are therefore:

- extending our approach to disabled and under-/mis-represented audiences to ensure we can serve anyone who faces barriers, experiences exclusion, finds limited representation or advocacy in the arts based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, sex, sexual orientation, personal circumstances and faith, as well as disability.
- continuing to monitor, embrace and reflect individual and groups' identities respectfully in our practices and the words we use.

TARGET GROUP 2: Industry Peers / Theatres and Disability Arts Organisations

Vital Xposure is actively opening new channels of communication with organisations across the UK with a view to form collaborations for future activities, identify areas of mutual support and share learning and expertise. As we move to the second decade of the company under new creative leadership, this year will focus on:

- a) attending and participating in sector specific events
- b) exploring future models of touring and co-operation with other arts organisations
- c) engaging with colleagues in the sector to share expertise and mutual learning

Vital Xposure will also increase its visibility at industry events with presentations or participation in discussion panels. These presentations will feed into further digital content (see Creative Media and Digital) and ongoing monitoring of our work.

What will success look like?

- 3 new collaboration plans with previous / current partner organisations (UK wide)
- 3 new future partnership plans with regional organisations
- 3 presentations by the Artistic Director at industry events
- 20% increase of our online following across our platforms
- 61 disabled creatives engaging with VX (see also: Engagement and Participation)

ACE Investment Principles No: 1, 2, 3, 4

ACE Let's Create Outcomes: 1, 2, 3, 4

Monitoring and Evaluation

In 2020 we carried out a two-stage Impact Survey with creative professionals we worked with and/or employed in two periods: 2018 – 2020 (stage one) and 2011 – 2017 (stage two). The responses provided an insight into our strengths, internal areas of development and how we may support disabled creatives.

We will continue to collect qualitative and quantitative data about our work and our stakeholders (audiences, beneficiaries, collaborators). We acknowledge that the majority of the data collection will be carried out online through:

- feedback surveys / questionnaires
- tracking and analytics tools
- one-to-one interviews or discussions as appropriate
- equality and diversity monitoring forms

We have improved our data collection processes using digital tools, sharing results of analyses with the team and the Board. We will continue to use Google Analytics, Mailchimp reports and Social Media tracking tools (Twitter and LinkedIn Page Analytics, Facebook and Instagram Insights, YouTube Studio and Vimeo Analytics) to:

- track online audiences: changes in our followers' numbers and geographical reach
- optimise the user's experience across our digital channels, including accessibility

We will also continue to use Audience Finder to identify and keep abreast of theatre audience trends and arts-goers' profiles. We will compare these to equality data we collect directly so as to identify categories or characteristics that may not be adequately reflected in our audiences/stakeholders and take concrete steps to address any gaps. This will complement the company's ongoing interrogation of 'Who is not in the room? Why? How do we bring them in?' in terms of our work and responsibility.

We have a revised Data Protection policy, approved by the Board (December 2020), which we will continue to monitor and update according to legislation and best practice. We will continue to put in place data sharing agreements with partner organisations either for touring, participatory or community engagement activities.

We will continue to implement our Environmental Policy and the Action Plan, collecting and analysing data through Julie's Bicycle. This year we will set out to review and revise the plan so as to reflect the impact of the pandemic and, in light of returning to our office base at Hackney Empire when circumstances permit. We will prioritise strengthening our capacity to demonstrate our commitment to the four principles of the Industry Green Framework and communicate this to our stakeholders.

Further we will actively seek sector initiatives for environmental responsibility, recognising that many of the climate change challenges we face in the coming years will need cross sector collaboration. To this end, we have linked into Fuel's Producing and Touring Network, who have already begun to investigate models for this sort of collaboration.

In 2021 - 2022 we will focus on:

- a) creating an impact evaluation framework for each Vital Xposure activity with input from our stakeholders, to ensure the terminology is inclusive of intersectionality and for ongoing sharing of case studies to demonstrate our impact and profile of the creatives we support

- b) implementing a new Customer Relationships Management (CRM) system to streamline recoding of stakeholders' contacts, segmentation per target audiences to improve our communications and support we can provide to Vital Xposure's beneficiaries.
- c) creating a framework to revise our Environment Action Plan with concrete SMART goals for 2022/2026

We will also continue to liaise with sector specific advisors (such as the Digital Culture Network, ITC, ICO, IT4Arts, Julie's Bicycle) and enhance our team's skills and knowledge on new developments in data collection and optimisation of our digital communications.

What would success look like?

- a new CRM system in place
- a new evaluation framework for future work
- a plan for regular sharing of 'case studies'
- a clear framework of revision of our Environment Action Plan

ACE Investment Principles No: 1, 2, 3, 4

ACE Let's Create Outcomes: 3

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality and inclusion is, quite simply, core to Vital Xposure's DNA. The impetus behind Vital Xposure's work is to connect with people who have limited engagement with the arts or those who are under-represented in the sector. We consider there is a strong correlation between people who have protected characteristics and also have low engagement in theatre. Vital Xposure is disabled led but we are aware of diversity within diversity, multi-faceted identities, and the intersectionality of discrimination that people face and which our work strives to combat.

In all of Vital Xposure's work we aim to remove barriers that prevent inclusion and engagement and see the need to transform the arts by realising potential. In particular, Vital Xposure recognises the Social Model of Disability and is committed to meeting the access requirements of all of those who engage with the organisation, starting with the staff team. Vital Xposure is at the forefront of best practice in applying the social model to touring theatre productions.

Our programme continues to see Vital Xposure develop innovative access practice, building on previous work and which is developed in collaboration with diverse artists and, as outlined above, to create new collaborations with work of excellence that will deliver Arts Council's Creative Case for Diversity.

Engagement and participation

2021 - 2022 will bring a strategic pivot to Vital Xposure's work which will expand our participatory work. Our hope is to channel the multitudinous energy around issues of social justice we find on social media and build participatory communities to engage creatively in telling these stories. Furthermore, we will bring together disabled and enabled people to work on projects in their common interest. We will create space to remove oppressive disability narratives and commission work on issues of social justice, wellbeing and communication.

OUTCOMES:

Project	Artists/journalists/tutors	Participants	Audience	Notes
Pipeline	4 (all disabled)	15 (venue leaders)	0	Tea and cake conversations with venues
White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels	8 (4 disabled)	0	?	1 R&D
COVID Uncovered	8 journalists	10 (all disabled)	2000	8 online master-classes, 1 online publication
Wellspring	8 tutors (4 disabled)	8 (all disabled)	60 (industry leaders and peers)	8 teaching sessions, 16 mentoring sessions, 1 industry showcase

Finance

Vital Xposure has successfully managed financial sustainability since its formation in 2011, balancing artistic vision with careful resource management. We continue to work on the diversification of our income and reduce reliance on ACE funding. In 2018, Vital Xposure was successful in securing two year's funding from City Bridge Trust, our first significant non-arts funding and, in 2021 we successfully secured a further three years continuation of funding.

We will be building on this in future years through increased focus on fundraising, developing individual giving strategies and campaigns, as well as an increasing level of financial support and the number of trusts and foundations with whom we have relationships.

We recognise that the post-COVID-19 funding environment is likely to be challenging, with increased competition for fewer resources. We will undertake a review of our business modelling processes to ensure resilience, investigating opportunities for collaboration and partnership, as well as ways of maximising the organisation's skills and ability to generate new income streams. We will continue to identify potential funders who might support project activities as an integral part of project development.

We routinely develop scaleable projects so that we can deliver them within available resources. This might include an R&D phase, leading to the securing of development funding for further R&D and then seeking further partners and funders to deliver a full production.

Vital Xposure has strong financial controls in place with clear monitoring systems and regular scrutiny and reporting to Trustees. Annual budgets drawn up are analysed by the Board, along with a risk assessment against any unsecured income linked to project developments, prior to being approved by the full board of trustees.

Once the annual budget is approved, regular monthly management accounts are prepared and analysed by the Executive Director and Artistic Director to ensure that the company's financial management remains on target. The management accounts are circulated to trustees regularly with any variances and mitigation plans articulated. Individual project leads work within agreed parameters, managing their delegated budgets and are supported by the Executive Director to ensure these remain on budget.

All income and expenditure is cost centred and coded to monitor and report against the agreed budgets, with variances and changes being identified and appropriately actioned. Quarterly management accounts are prepared and circulated to the Trustees for in depth discussion, highlighting any variances against budgets with mitigation plans to protect the company prepared for each board meeting and circulated to key funders as and when required.

The organisation has operated with tight well managed budgets that have enabled the company to build up sufficient reserves to satisfy our Reserves Policy of three months' unavoidable operating costs, and has made small surpluses to contribute to its free reserves in the last two accounting periods. These reserves have cushioned the company in times of fluctuating project income and will be utilised in future accounting periods when larger scale productions require higher levels of investment.

Budget 2021-22

Vital Xposure seeks to tour a production to audiences nationally each second or third year. In the years where a tour does not take place, the company endeavours to make a surplus in order to invest in artistic activity in future years.

The 2021 - 2022 financial year is the first full year of tenure for the company's recently appointed Artistic Director, Simon Startin. As such, we see this as a year of investment in new foundation projects developed by Startin, alongside preparation, research and development for our next planned public facing production, ***White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels***.

Vital Xposure intends to draw upon its brought forward resources during 2021 - 2022 financial year as it invests in artist development and participatory programming. The Writer's Development Programme, supported by funding from City Bridge Trust, will provide training, mentoring and support to new disabled writers, and from this cohort, it is envisaged that future new productions will be commissioned. A further development project, the Community Journalism project, will support the company's participatory activity, alongside regional young people's participatory activity on *White Pariahs*. The company is actively seeking support from trusts and foundations to invest in these activities, but we recognise that post-COVID-19 additional grant income will be challenging to secure.

These investments will draw upon our brought forward designated artistic reserve and underpin our artistic programming in future periods and ensure this continuity of activity. We are forecasting an in year loss of up to £15,000.

	2020-2021 out- turn	Core Delivery 2021- 2022	Additional activity subj. to funding
Confirmed Core Income			
Arts Council England	£ 102,431	£ 100,580	-
Trusts and Foundations	£ 21,450	-	-
Earned Income	£ 934	-	-
Contributed income - e.g Sponsorship & donations	£ 14,456	-	-
Total Secured Core Income	£ 139,522	£ 100,580	-
Unsecured Core Income (fundraising Target)			
Trusts and Foundations		£ 5,000	£ 6,000
Earned Income		£ 2,000	-
Total Unsecured Core Income	-	£ 7,000	£ 6,000
Confirmed Project Income			
Writers' Development Project		£ 31,681	
Total Secured Project Income	-	£ 31,681	-
Unsecured Project Income (fundraising Target)			
LCRF proposal			£ 36,225
Total Unsecured Project Income	-	-	£ 36,225
Total Income	£ 139,522	£ 139,261	£ 42,225
Expenditure			
Direct Project Expenditure			
Prod 1 - White Pariahs	£ 14,368	£ 4,160	-
LCRF proposal		-	£ 31,500
Community Journalism Project	-	£ 10,000	-
Film Screenings & Festivals	£ 872		
Writers' Development Project		£ 36,355	-
Total Direct Project Expenditure	£ 15,241	£ 50,515	£ 31,500
Core Costs			
Total Core Staff Costs	£ 89,743	£ 74,001	-
Core Freelance Consultants' fees	£ 3,782	£ 4,865	£ 4,635
Core Administration	£ 21,600	£ 20,854	-
Total Core Costs	£ 115,125	£ 99,721	£ 4,635
Total Expenditure	£ 130,366	£ 150,237	£ 36,135
Operating Surplus/(Deficit) before transfers	£ 9,157	(10,976)	6,090

What Does Success Look Like?

Artistic Programme

To deliver a critically acclaimed programme, share best practice and learning around diversity to promote change in the arts and cultural sector

- run a year round artistic programme of development and produced quality, accessible and diverse work
- develop our partnerships, working collaboratively and seeking co-productions nationally

Artist development

To support diverse emerging artists to develop their skills and increase their profile across the sector

- to work with and provide the necessary support to raise the skills and profile of artists from diverse arts sectors

Communications, Marketing and Audience development

To increase the number of people regularly engaging with our work by the end of 2022, growing our audiences and online supporters who join our mailing lists by 20% per annum

- develop and extend Vital Xposure's reach nationally and internationally
- increase engagement with and retain audiences, particularly from the disabled sector

Staff and Board

To have a strong, multi-experienced and engaged Board of Trustees and team to enable the organisation to continue to grow and develop

- provide staff with up to date appraisal systems, monitoring their development and enabling training where appropriate
- create a caring and stimulating environment for staff to work within, where each individual knows their value, with appropriate policies to support good working practice, to be reviewed annually by the Board
- to work with outside agencies where appropriate, in undertaking recruitment
- undertake annual audit of Board skills and recruit new membership where appropriate
- undertake and facilitate an annual Board away day

Finance and diversification of income

To have a mixed stream of funding sources to enable the delivery of Vital Xposure's work

- review Vital Xposure's fundraising strategy to be agreed by the Board, including identification of Trusts and Foundations to support specific aspects of the company's work
- put in place a Board Finance Sub Committee
- develop collaborations and co-productions

Monitoring and evaluation

To implement self-evaluation practices to enable continuous improvements to quality, effectiveness and artist development across all programme areas

- annually review our monitoring and evaluation procedures, reporting to the Board in Autumn, annually

Policy development

- review and update our policies, reporting to the Board in Autumn, annually

- review and update our Staff Handbook, prior to each production, ensuring it is fit for purpose for the needs of the company/rehearsal and tour
- review Equality Action Plan and Audience Development Plan, using evidence to hand, to report to the Board in Autumn, annually
- our Environmental Policy is regularly reviewed and updated, reporting to the Board

Risk Register

- continue to monitor risks that may impact on Vital Xposure, making this a regular Board agenda item

SWOT Analysis

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artistic quality with embedded vision and values, driven by equality & diversity • Uniqueness – politically aware work with a social conscience and understanding of the aesthetics of access provision • Arts Council NPO funding confirmed to 2023 • Engagement with communities’ whose voices are under-represented in the national theatre sector • Showcasing talent of disabled artists • Developing new talent as performers and theatre practitioners • Simon Startin is a known political and disability advocate nationally • Strengthened Board • Co-productions with a number of organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low company profile nationally • Limited successful fundraising to diversify income generation strategy from trusts and foundations • Small staff team with one strong artistic lead in the company – all part time • Balancing local, national, international responsibilities and work • Taking on too many additional projects, overstretching the staff team, • Lack of partnerships with core group of national venues • Lack of articulation of VX impact within the disability sector and across theatre sector • Little relationship with national press
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusivity and Relevance, ACE’s Investment Principle within Let’s Create, builds on the Creative Case for Diversity, which is central to Vital Xposure’s raison d’être • Increased understanding of intersectionality, which has underpinned the company’s work since its inception • Social media and digital work • Increasing visibility and profile within the arts sector nationally • To create partnerships with a cohort of national venues that value the unique skills and experience of Vital Xposure • Leverage support for projects that explore multiple forms of protected characteristics and how they interrelate • Diversification of funding opportunities across income strands including Trusts and Foundations and other private giving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post Covid-19 theatre environment is unknown • Current economic climate with changes to disability allowances and Universal Credit, local authorities and funding bodies, creating challenges of finding support for artists and projects • Individual giving and capacity to donate may be lessened as a result of the pandemic. • Loss of NPO funding post 2023 • The NPO application round for 2023 will be very competitive • Competition from other companies in the sector • An increase in hate crime towards disabled people through lack of tolerance around difference and diversity

Risk Register

Activity	Principal Risks	Potential Outcome	Risk Level low, med or high	Preventive Action
Further lockdowns as a result of increased COVID-19 level	A return to remote working	Theatre and venue closures Project activity needs to be rescheduled and arranged	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All activity plans include virtual / remote alternative to face to face activity No direct audience facing activity planned for 2021-2022 financial year to reduce exposure to this risk
Company's Artistic plans lack ambition	Programmes fail to achieve artistic excellence	Lack of interest from all stakeholders including partners, funders and participants Loss of support from Arts Council and other key arts funders	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong artistic leadership, new Artistic Director Simon Startin appointed in January 2021 Engaging high quality artists External peer review
Lack of organisational planning	Vital Xposure lacks of direction and forward planning financial management difficulties	Loss of key funders no clear objectives, priorities or plans	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A business plan with key aims, objectives and policies is in place, monitored, revised and updated Engagement with beneficiaries Financial plans and budgets in place Strong leadership and artistic excellence
Poor Governance	Trustee Board lacks relevant skills or commitment	Vital Xposure becomes moribund or fails to achieve its purpose Poor decisions are made Decisions are made, bypassing the trustees	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trustee skills audit undertaken /Review and agreement of skills required to be undertaken Refreshing board of Trustees Trustee job descriptions drafted Trustee training and induction
Poor management	Loss of key staff	Experience or skills lost Operational impact on key projects and priorities Loss of contact base and corporate knowledge Ineffective organisational structure	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear succession planning Document systems, plans and projects Implementation of training programmes Agreed notice periods and handovers Clear recruitment processes in place

Activity	Principal Risks	Potential Outcome	Risk Level low, med or high	Preventive Action
Lack of financial controls	Budgetary control and financial reporting	Budget does not match key objectives and priorities Decisions made on inaccurate financial projections or reporting decisions made based on unreliable costing data or income projections Inability to meet commitments or key objectives Poor credit control Poor cash flow and treasury Management ability to function as going concern	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budgets linked to business planning and objectives • Monitoring and reporting in a timely and accurate way • Use proper costing procedures for productions or project delivery • Adequate skills base to produce and interpret budgetary and financial reports • Agreement of procedures to review and action budget/cash flow variances and monitor and control costs • Regular review of reserves and investments
Compliance with legislation and regulations	Failure to meet legislative requirements	Fines, penalties or censure from licensing or activity regulators Employee or consumer action for negligence Reputational risks	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of key legal and regulatory requirements • Allocation of responsibility for key compliance procedures • Compliance monitoring and reporting in place
Fundraising and income diversification	Failure to secure income and meet fundraising targets	Reduction in scale and ambition of artistic programme Reduction in resources to support complex and increasing human needs Staff overstretched	Med	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong fundraising programme with good 'lead in' time-scales • Staff supervision and support to ensure that funding gaps are identified and mitigated for in a timely fashion • Formation of a trustee-led fundraising sub-group
Monitoring & evaluation	Failure to generate strong quantitative outcomes within programmes	Loss of funding and commissioning	Low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic targets set in all funding/ commissioning proposals • Effective monitoring to detect trends & take effective action when needed • Ongoing development of evaluation methodologies

Arts Council England Investment Principles

Vital Xposure Project or production	Objective
	<p>Ambition & Quality – Vital Xposure’s plans for 2021 - 2022 centre on establishing Simon Startin as the company’s new Artistic Director and laying the foundations for the creative future of the company, supporting new diverse artists and forging new partnerships.</p>
<p>White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels</p>	<p>In 2021-22 we will continue to develop this production, undertaking R&D in summer 2021 in preparation for a national tour in 2022.</p> <p>The R&D will bring together the artistic components of the production. Hakim Adi, Professor of History of Africa and the African Diaspora at Chichester University, will support the development of online resources for young people, with a Young Historian’s project.</p> <p>Spring 2022: Participatory workshops with young people in 3 regions to inform on line resources, audience development and participation in final live production.</p> <p>Production partners and touring plans for 2022 to be finalised</p>
<p>Wellspring</p>	<p>Professional development project for disabled playwrights in London, providing the technical skills and improved professional networks to pursue a sustainable writing career</p> <p>Vital Xposure will nurture and support 8 disabled playwrights, working with new writing venues to ensure that these writers has maximum exposure.</p> <p>Develop relationships with partner organisations on delivery</p>
	<p>Inclusivity and Relevance – All of Vital Xposure’s work will be developed and delivered by diverse led teams of creatives, self-identifying under the Protected Characteristics and/or Socio-economic exclusion</p>
<p>White Pariahs: Quiet Rebels</p>	<p>To uncover and share the stories and experiences of Windrush families, bringing these experiences to a wider audience. Connect to communities less engaged with the arts; provide employment opportunities for under-represented groups</p>
<p>COVID Uncovered</p>	<p>Providing participatory engagement opportunities through a citizen journalism project</p>
<p>Wellspring</p>	<p>Providing new and increased opportunities for deaf and disabled artists in a rolling professional development project gain skills and access opportunities within the arts</p>

Vital Xposure Project or production	Objective
Dynamism – Vital Xposure will continue to focus on resilience, ensuring that our people are supported to develop their skills and systems renewed and updated to make best use of emerging data	
Board	A strong, multi-experienced and engaged Board of Trustees through regular skills audits and ongoing trustee recruitment programme Board actively engaged in the review and update of Business Plan. Away Day planned for summer 2021
Staff	New Artistic Director’s induction completed, New project partners identified and engaged
Fundraising	Fundraising Strategy aligned to revised business plan published and approved by Board Additional funding streams secured
Organisation & systems	Digital Engagement Plan, agreed by the team and the Board (in place by January 2022) Customer Relationships Management (CRM) system in place to better track and manage stakeholder data Design and implementation of effective self-evaluation practices which aim to enable continuous improvements to quality, effectiveness and artist development across all programme areas
Environmental Responsibility	
Environmental Policy	Continue to implement our Environmental Policy and the Action Plan, collecting and analysing data through Julie’s Bicycle. Strengthen our capacity to demonstrate our commitment to the four principles of the Industry Green Framework and communicate this to our stakeholders