

The most public novel ever written.

*This document is intended to serve as a snapshot in time of the organisation’s position and intention towards the project. It covers the design of an arts project that eQuality Time would like to carry out. It is based around the format of the Arts Council funding to make a future application simplier and the review notes reflect this. However, it is a living document in it’s own right and contains a large amount of information and illustration that is intended for sharing with the wider public rather than a funding body.*

Abstract

We’ll gather a group of 10 of the best unknown British writers and let them work together to create a piece that is truly worthy of their talent within seven days. The writers will work in the TooManyCooks framework – prototyped with students and disadvantaged groups that will allow the public to see every word as it is written and track the evolution of the work as an art show in it’s own right.

*or*

Over seven days, ten writers will work together to create a full novel. They will plan the narrative for one day, draft for three days, and refine the narrative for three days. Every word of the evolving narrative will be publicly viewable. The process of creation has been used repeatedly with university students and disadvantaged groups. This will be the first time it’s been applied to working writers and the first time that the public will be encouraged to see the development in real time.

We have a proposed start date of 17th August 2016

# Introduction

## Why eQuality Time?

eQuality Time LTD was formed in 2014 with team members who have a strong artistic range of achievements. Joe Reddington comes from a background of counter-culture and disability related projects - his art projects include the 418 teapot (http://goo.gl/Wf3056), the White Water Writers project

(http://goo.gl/sFBM4z) and Flowers for Turing (http://goo.gl/nNrdtf)

Douglas Cowie is an American novelist and senior lecturer in creative writing at Royal Holloway, University of London. He is the author of Owen Noone and the Marauder (Canongate 2005), Sing for Life: Tin Pan Alley (Black Hill Press 2013), Sing for Life: Away, You Rolling River (Black Hill Press 2014), as well as various short stories and essays.

Fran Baker is a journalist, events organiser, and marketer. She is founder and creator of Let’s Tell Stories, a space to read and write to inspire and learn. She's also 'Scribbler' for the intelligent but irreverent For Book’s Sake, dedicated to literature by women, for women'.

## The Project

In 2009, Dr Reddington and Dr Cowie developed a new approach to collaborative writing with groups of authors, this approach has proved to produce spectacularly strong, heartfelt work with writers from primary school age to university students. The approach focuses on short intense bursts of creativity lasting one week and is extremely media friendly. However, it's also always been held back by the natural limits of it's young writers.

We propose a non-profit event ("TooManyCooks") designed to showcase some of the UK's most talented unpublished writers in a process that is artistic both at the level of production, and in terms of the process used. The first part of the activity is a 'time to write' project, compensating two groups of ten professional- standard writers for the time over week-long periods to produce two full length literary works on topics in the 'now' - the unique approach to writing and the extreme shortness of the project allows us to work within the modern 24-hour news cycle and reflect back our interpretations of a current event.

The second part of the activity is that we intend to stage the writing process itself as an artistic event to engage with a wider audience. By livestreaming video of the planning stages and making all stages of the drafting public (to the extent that the audience can see every keystroke) we show the complete life- cycle of a novel from start to finish and realise the artistic work globally.

# Our Goals

* To employ writers
* To improve (14) writers and put them on the path to a real publishing deal
* To inspire young people as a live display. (40 of them in person)
* As an art event in its own right.
* As a proof of concept for TooManyCooks operating at high level.

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## Development of the writers

One of our key goals is the development of the writers we choose. The writers will work in a way that is entirely new to them - with group structures in place to help them focus their creativity onto their work. By working in a highly collaborative environment with nine other writers, they can influence, and be influenced by the other writers think about writing, rather than only viewing each other’s work at clearly defined stages.

We believe that one of the great tragedies in literature is that the modern commercial environment accepts only the 'complete package' - and that there are writers who craft breathtaking narrative but who are let down by their dialogue; writers who can give a world utter realism, but who have underdeveloped characterisation. By putting writers in this highly collaborative environment, we give them the space to really exercise their skills, creating an extremely strong narrative, but also the experience to develop those area that they need to before they can be acceptable to publishing outlets.

A second core goal is to push the boundaries of collaborative published fiction as an art form. This will be a far more demanding event for our writers than they will have experienced before and the result of our work will challenge the art communities, and the public’s perception of what the relationship between author and work should be. Indeed, an advantage of the TooManycooks process is that the novel can be set astonishingly close to the time it’s read, and respond to political and cultural events that may have only happened a couple of weeks ago from the reader’s perspective.

## The audience

We have identified three engaged groups as our main targets: the writers, the readers, and the people following the interactive writing process. The development of writers is disused elsewhere in this application.

Our readers will engage with the work in the traditional way – of buying and reading a novel that pushes artistic boundaries. An advantage of the TooManycooks process is that the novel can be set astonishingly close to the time it’s read, and respond to political and cultural events that may have only happened a couple of weeks ago from the reader’s perspective.

We expect that public-facing aspect of this work will appeal to; school groups (who may visit to watch); university groups; people interested in the craft of writing and a wide range of people globally. For our wider audience who will be accessing the project via the internet, it will be the first time they will have a chance to see the full workflow of a novel from inception to proofreading. People who access the content several times a day will see the intricate changes happening at a paragraph level, whereas people who access several times over the week will see the power and effectiveness of a small group of determined and talented people.

## Work already completed

This project has been in development at eQuality Time for over a year. During this time a significant amount of human resource has been spent preparing for the project launch. This includes:

* The development of a Comprehensive theory of change outlining of the needs of the project from the point of view of participants, audience members, influencers, and funders.
* Scouting of potential locations for the project to be based in. This has covered several citys and a number of difference scenarios as detailed in our audience development plan. Scouting of locations
* Extensive trialing of the process with student groups designed to mimic the effects of a large public viewing.
* Significant development on IMAS, our custom-written software that allows the writers, and their every keystroke, to be broadcast worldwide.
* A comprehensive project risk assessment at strategic and tactical levels.

## Fundraising

As part of our preparation for the project, we carried out a comprehensive survey of potential funders for this style of work, and who, in particular, understand that we are keen to pay artists the value of their work. Our key targets are:

* ‘The Split Inifinitive Trust’ (Grants for organisations and individuals in the UK for projects that support live and performance arts, in general and in education.) <http://goo.gl/EmQ7WH>
* Fenton Arts Trust (Funding is available to support individual works, activities, performances or prizes in the fields of drama, painting, sculpture, ballet, music, poetry and architecture in the UK.) <http://goo.gl/TJOqbF>
* Old Possum’s Practical Trust(Grants are available to support literary, artistic, musical and theatrical projects and organisations in the UK.) <http://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/SchemeList.aspx?SH=FRD5758X0S&FT=FTI%3d%22GRANT%22%2cFSS%3d%222%22&BK=4&WCU=CBC=View,DSCODE=OTSSCMLIVE,SCHEMEID=248-S32530>

Each of these has an application in preparation; however we judged that the Arts Council should be our highest priority in terms of applications.

### Support in kind

As a design decision, this project includes no ‘Support in Kind’: a key reason for the project is that we believe all of our artists should be, and must be, paid fairly. There will be no volunteering on this project, and all of our costs within our budget document.

## Please provide a brief summary of your and your partners' recent experience in managing similar types of activity(1500 char):

In this particular case, the effectiveness of the central event has been repeatedly demonstrated with a wide range of privately conducted trails with a variety of people involved.

As part of White Water Writers, Dr Reddington as managed groups of writers producing over 50 novels from schools, colleges, community centres, and areas of disadvantage. From a logistical point of view, the only differences between this project and those is the level of talent of the writers and the public facing aspects and publicity, which has been discussed separated in the audience development plan.

## Our financial responsibilities.

Equality Time was awarded grant funding of £34k in 2014 and £50k in 2015 and receives an increasing amount of earned income as projects mature and become sustainable.

Equality Time has a mix of restricted and unrestricted funding Overhead costs are clearly identified and we aim to apply 'full cost recovery’ in all cases. Core costs are apportioned to projects and 20% of invoiced income is allocated to overheads.

Prior to joining eQuality Time our treasurer had experience of budgeting in the social enterprise sector, having founded and run West Lancs Positive Living (charity) EnDevA (CIC) and Phil the Box (Co ltd by guarantee) and is currently legal and financial officer with Burscough Parish Council managing an income of over £100,000 pa which is subject to strict budget controls and external audit.

Accounts are prepared using a spreadsheet, and all income and expenditure is allocated to a budget heading and to a fund. A bank reconciliation and analysis of variation from budget is completed monthly so that we always know that expenditure is on track. All expenditure decisions are decided at committee meetings and all payments require two signatories. Financial controls are robust.

At the outset, Equality Time invested in the services of an accountant (TLL) who has specialist knowledge of the third sector, so that as we grow we are confident that our accounting systems are capable of growing with us and that we always have access to sound advice.

## Evaluation

Our audience development plan (attached) gives details of the specific audience and media engagement that we are tracking in order to achieve our targets in those areas. The quantitative data we shall be recording includes the number of attendees in person and watching online, as well as the engagement and reach of press coverage.

In terms of evaluation of the artistic output – in additional to critical evaluation, we will be collecting qualitative information from both our artists and members of the public by means of interviews, focus groups and other engagement activities associated with the performance. We have a particular focus on how the artists believe they have grown during the project.

In terms of using the information to monitor performance and achievements during the activity. Project management will involve informal and formal review meetings between Dr Reddington and the eQuality Time directors. Formal review meetings will be scheduled at the end of each month, with written reviews of progress at the end of each three-month period. These meetings and reports will each evaluate the status of the project against its indicators and relevant changes will be made where necessary.