



A project to empower Syrian art in exile

Concept Note and Guidelines



International Alert.

1. Project Background and Aims

Create Syria is a partnership between Ettijahat, Independent Culture, the British Council and International Alert to enhance the expertise of artists and cultural activists living outside of Syria, including displaced Syrians. The project aims to create environments and initiatives which will enable Syrian artists, cultural activists, and civil society organisations to play increasingly active roles in improving the lives of Syrians, primarily by supporting creative endeavours which develop long-term cooperation and mutual resilience between Syrians and host communities.

In light of the political, economic, and cultural changes that Syria is witnessing, the project seeks to create a long-term support network for Syrian artistic production which will strengthen contemporary art practices and target refugees and communities in crisis. The project will also address local audiences in the host communities into which artists and new cultural initiatives have moved.

Between 2015 and 2016 the project will focus on artists and initiatives in Lebanon, and will be based on four core components:

The first component addresses the need to develop actors' skills in artistic project design and management during times of crisis. It will use training schemes and events to demonstrate techniques which use art to challenge stereotypes and alleviate tensions and frustrations.

The second component denotes a support network for ten artistic cultural projects which will be implemented over a six-month period, all over Lebanon. Create Syria seeks to support projects which are innovative and think outside of traditional frameworks.

The third component entails the establishment of a platform on which Syrian artists and cultural activists can promote their work and artistic projects at international festivals. It also aims to encourage opportunities for collaboration and cooperation between Syrian artists and their international peers.

The fourth component comprises of an interactive dialogue targeting Syrian audiences in their new environments and linking them with artists, civil society organisations, and decision-makers, with the aim of developing independent Syrian cultural production abroad and enhancing collaboration between displaced persons and host communities.

Project Foundations

The goals of Create Syria are based on the two following goals:

- To develop the creative and analytical skills of displaced artists and to provide shared spaces for the production of shared work and dialogue between refugees and host communities. This will increase artists' and local communities' wellbeing, confidence, and inclinations to address common challenges as artists and citizens.
- To provide opportunities for exchange and dialogue between Syrian artists, non-Syrian artists already established in the region, Syrians in diaspora in Europe, and policymakers. This will raise visibility and awareness of the arts and conflict sensitivity,

and will foster resilience on the part of those most affected by the current situation in Syria.

Create Syria Project Objectives

The objectives specific to this project are:

- To build the artistic capacity of up to 15 artists and CSOs in artistic cultural project management as well as their networking skills. This programme targets emerging and established artists in addition to CSOs at cultural organisations.
- To support the implementation of 10 new artistic projects from cultural managers and artists, including emerging artists, and to aid them in reaching international art platforms through dialogue. This would benefit citizens in areas with notable refugee populations as well as the artists themselves.
- To engage Syrian citizens who live in refugee camps and host communities in a series of dialogues about issues affecting their lives. These dialogues will be made through a series of artistic methods and collective artistic expression.
- To raise awareness of the value of art and culture in times of crisis, both in Syria and in the wider region.

Project Principles

Create Syria works under the following principles, all of which should be reflected in its projects:

- *Conflict sensitivity* – this project will operate in a conflict-sensitive way and will mitigate for the unintended consequences of action which could further polarise refugees and their host communities. All actions are undertaken with the aim to support progress towards peace and mutual cooperation in the region.
- *Cultural sensitivity* – Syrian cultural and artistic expression are at the heart of all activities. The project will use Syrian culture as a medium through which to promote resilience in time of crisis and displacement.
- *Gender sensitivity* – gender plays a key role in the power dynamics of communities and an understanding of gender issues is vital to this project's success. The project will employ participation from a diverse range of people including men, women, and those of other gender identities.
- *Sustainability* – the project acts on the recognised concept that participation in the arts helps citizens (including refugees) to shift from a state of victimhood towards a state of proactive action where they are able to create and build their own futures.
- *Dialogue as resilience* – the project will use a strategic process whereby participants will engage in dialogue processes through the arts. This will enhance their individual and collective resilience and their capacities and inclinations to work together to improve the quality of their lives.
- *Aesthetic quality* – the project and accompanying schemes will be designed to support high quality artistic production and use of innovative techniques to bring these pieces to wider audiences.

Who is Create Syria aimed at?

- Organisers of projects that have scope to become self-sustainable depend integrally upon the participation of refugees.
- Organisers of projects which utilise any and all means of artistic expression – no exceptions.

- Syrian (and Palestinian-Syrian) artists and managers of cultural projects who are less than 40 years old.
- Artists and project managers must reside in Lebanon for the duration of the training phase and the project implementation phase.
- Participants with innovative projects which fall outside of traditional frameworks.
- Organisers of projects which are based on collaboration between Syrian artists and their peers in Lebanon. Such projects are prioritised during the evaluation phase, on the condition that they meet all other artistic requirements.
- Applicants with artistic projects do not need previous experience; indeed, the project actively encourages applications from emerging artists.
- Organisers of projects with an educational streak are entitled to apply on the condition that their project is also fundamentally artistic.
- All Syrian parties (institutions, initiatives, collectives, etc.) working in the independent cultural sector are allowed to apply for the project. These groups must apply through one Project Manager who will be responsible for the application and implementation of the project.

2. Project criteria and conditions

Conditions for participation

- Applicants must attend all components of the project's activities, including training, grant implementation, and the Syrian Artists Platform launch.
- Applicants must commit to the period for the submission of the application, i.e. the 6 of November until the 16th of December 2015 (23:59 Beirut / GMT +2). Applications received after the deadline will not be evaluated.
- All applications should be completed in Arabic. The annexes may be submitted in other languages.
- Projects which receive grants must begin being implemented in February 2016 finish before September 2016.
- Each project is provided with funding support of up to \$10,000 USD.
- If project's budget exceeds \$10,000 USD, applicants must provide documentation indicating their capacity to secure the rest of funding. Documentation must be provided before the 1st of February 2016.
- All grant applicants must specify other sources of funding where applicable.
- Applications which do not comply with evaluation criteria in terms of content and/or administrative demands will not be considered. Applications which have not been completed and/or are missing required documents will not be considered. These documents are:
 - Completed electronic Application Form
 - Applicant's CV
 - Applicant's Motivation Letter
 - Copy of valid identification (ID or passport, only applicable to applications made by individuals)
 - Copy of the valid Lebanese residency (only applicable to applications made by individuals)
 - Institutional work documentation (only applicable to organisations and institutions)

- Applicant's Letter of Recommendation (only applicable to applications made by individuals)
- Samples of previous work, sketches, or any other supporting documents or materials for the proposed project
- Applications must include the following electronic application form attached in this link: www.ettijahat.org
- If a project proposes any component regarding psychological analysis of its participants, the project's working team must include qualified specialists in the field. Alternatively, the project must enlist the participation of qualified psychology specialists. This must be made explicit in the project description.
- This project does not support educational or development relief projects.
- This project does not support cultural activities that aim to implement cultural activity without the integral and active participation of beneficiaries.
- Funding does not apply for the following projects:
 - Continuous training workshops that are implemented without progress or a definitive end point (such as a weekly drawing class for a period of six months)
 - A specific component of an organisational project that has already been fully designed
 - Projects which have already been implemented
 - Activities which do not actively include refugees or displaced persons, even if the project deals with other relevant groups.
- If the proposed project is part of a wider project which has already been launched, the applicant must specify, in detail, what has already been implemented and what will be achieved with the support of Create Syria.
- Projects can be implemented anywhere on Lebanese territory (within the bounds of Lebanese law).
- Targeted beneficiaries are not limited to the residents of refugee camps.
- The project does not cover travel expenses to/from Lebanon.
- Selected projects will be notified of the selection board's decisions. Results will be posted on the website: www.ettijahat.org and [Facebook page](#).
- For any additional information or enquiries, please contact Ettijahat at applications@ettijahat.org

Contractual conditions with accepted participants

- The 15 selected artists must attend a training module on designing and delivering artistic projects in times of crisis. Attending this training is mandatory and participants cannot be exempted from attendance.
- At the end of the training phase, 10 projects will be selected to continue and will be implemented over the following 6 months. Participants will adapt their projects based on advice and information gained during the training period.
- Participants must design and attend dialogue sessions in collaboration with the beneficiaries around the topic of the arts during times of crisis.
- Grant recipients will retain full rights for their artistic production, and must clearly acknowledge the support of Create Syria in any exhibition of thereof.
- Ettijahat, Independent Culture, the British Council and International Alert reserve the right to publish and publicise parts of a project's production during and after implementation. All three organisations will always explicitly attribute the work to the artist or organisation.

Participant Selection Criteria

- An independent board of specialists in cultural project design and planning will study and select participants. The board will remain confidential until the results are announced.
- Participant selection will be divided into two stages. The first stage is comprised of individual evaluations conducted by each member of the board. The second stage denotes collective evaluation and the final selection of 15 participants.
- Project evaluation is based on five components:
 - Creativity and innovation: demonstration of new and attractive elements and a project's ability to target audiences and beneficiaries in new ways.
 - Project feasibility: compatibility of the budget with the plan, availability of the place of implementation, and the availability of team members.
 - Participation: the ability to integrate and engage beneficiaries and host communities with positive results throughout different phases of the project.
 - Collaboration: the opportunity for collaboration between Syrian artists and their Lebanese peers.
 - Sustainability: the potential to build on the project's results in future projects.
- After attending the training, participants are asked to redesign and resubmit their projects.
- 10 projects will be awarded grants to the value of up to \$10,000 USD each.

Samples of previous work

- Samples of previous work can be attached in Microsoft Word or PDF format. File size must not exceed 5 MB.
- JPEG images can be attached. File size must not exceed 10 MB.
- Video and audio files can be attached in an email (file size must not exceed 6 MB) or uploaded to Dropbox or WeTransfer.

Timeline

- Launch of a Call for Applications: 6 November 2015
- Deadline for Call for Applications: 16 December 2015
- Announcement of results: early January 2016
- Training: mid-January 2016
- Selection of grant recipients and contract signing: February 2016
- Launch of the Syrian Artists' Platform: March 2016
- Duration of project: until end of July 2016