



The Next Steps

Looking for a consultant to consider options for development

Overview

The Swan Song Project is currently considering what might be the best structure and resources to take the organisation forward; how it could take the next step to developing the vision that as many people as possible get to write their Swan Songs? We are looking to appoint an external consultant to help us to consider the options.

Background

The Swan Song Project was founded in 2017 and registered with the Charities Commission in April 2018¹. It is based in Leeds and has the following remit:

*The Swan Song Project gives people living with terminal illnesses, dealing with bereavement, or planning their end stages of life the opportunity and support to write and record their own original song. that works with people who are facing the end of their lives or dealing with a bereavement to write and record an original song.*²

The Project has developed significantly over the last 5 years and the Trustees and CEO want to consider options for the development of the organisation and the work it undertakes. The trustees have decided that it would be a good use of resources to work with an external consultant to consider ideas and options towards a development plan for the coming years.

The first five years

Originally the project supported patients and family members of hospices across Leeds and Bradford. It has since made the service more widely available through other relevant organisations such as cancer charities, care homes and bereavement organisations. It also allows people to self-refer through the website. Sessions can be delivered in person or virtually.

The project has received a lot of public support and media attention—the concept resonates with people.

In practical terms the pandemic had a big impact on the organisation. Just at the point it was trying to boost levels of engagement hospices were forced to close their doors to any outside providers. Work was developed for online engagement and Swan Song offered an online singing group which was well-attended. There is also a Swan Song Project Podcast which features songwriters talking about their writing and their experiences of bereavement

¹ Details on Charity Commission website at <https://register-of-charities.charitycommission.gov.uk/charity-search/-/charity-details/5109343/charity-overview>

² Information and examples of work at <https://swansongproject.co.uk/>

and the charity also delivers "Music and Memories" sessions regularly. The charity also initially intended to create resources that would help people to write their Swan Songs without needing as much support as we currently offer. To-date minimal time has been committed to this idea apart from the podcast.

The Project continues to depend on the work of founder Ben Slack. In 2022 the Company trained a group of freelance musicians to be able to deliver sessions for the Company. This has meant that delivery has now doubled from the pre-pandemic levels and we are currently looking to complete Swan Songs with over 40 people this year.

Generating income

Swan Song has received a range of funding and has a particularly positive relationship with The National Lottery who has funded it several times and featured it in media promotions. It has also been able to access smaller amounts of funding from a range of funders including the Red Bull Academy, Leeds Community Foundation, and the Postcode Neighbourhood Trust.

Swan Song does also bring in significant amounts in public donation, ranging from a substantial donation from DJ Chris Evans to people organising fundraising events and activities like gigs or sponsored walks... This is without a fundraiser actively working on it so there is reason to believe this could be increased.

Resources

Swan Song currently has one part-time member of staff - Ben Slack (Founder/Creative Director, 3.5 days a week),³ There are also 11 freelance musicians who work with the Swan Song project. Some of these help with composing and co-creating the different songs and seven musicians have recently undergone a full training course run by Swan Song to give them the skills and understanding to be able to undertake the whole process of working with a participant on co-creating a song.

Two key members of the board of trustees have recently had to withdraw for health and personal reasons. The charity currently has a board of four trustees and is recruiting new trustees. Trustees have a range of relevant skills, understanding and experience of the work and the sector.

Moving forward

The question is to look at what the best structure and resources to take the Swan Song project forward.

We are looking for a consultant to work with the trustees and staff to consider options moving forward. This would include looking at a range of options including but not limited to:

- Reviewing and renewing the structure of Swan Song as a charity and the way it delivers the work

³ A Partnerships and Engagement Manager was employed on a 3-day a week contract. She recently left the organisation and the Company is currently putting a hold on recruiting until this review has been completed.

- Partnerships of merger with other organisations
- Looking at a social franchising model

In terms of resources we would like the consultant to consider:

- different options for paying and funding Swan Song's development
- the combination of jobs and roles that would be needed to deliver the service as it develops
- how/where we might address issues of inclusivity and diversity in order to improve our reach and performance
- governance and the role of the trustees
- an analysis of the risks involved with the different options

We would expect to work with the consultant to decide on a route forward and then to identify the steps and an outline timeline for Swan Song to progress.

What we are looking for

We would like to work with a consultant who has relevant experience and competencies:

- someone who understands and respects the values of the Swan Song charity.
- who has specific knowledge and experience of creating meaningful levels of change and development within an organisation.
- who is committed to a collaborative or coaching approach.

What we expect

We would like the work to be undertaken in the autumn of 2023 with report/reflection to the Board by the end of the year. Depending on the outcomes there might be some additional development work with the team in 2024.

Budget

We have a budget of £1500 for the initial exploratory work to be done in the autumn of 2023.

Next steps

If you are interested in the role, then please send a cv plus a covering letter indicating the approach you would propose for taking on such a role with Swan Song.

Please send your application by the end of the day on Sunday 10th September to trustees@swansongproject.co.uk

If you have any queries or would like to discuss the opportunity then please email trustees@swansongproject.co.uk to arrange a phone conversation.