

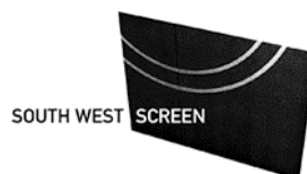
# Making it work:

An enquiry into how companies in the community media sector recruit and retain skilled freelancers



*A research report by Ella Bissett Johnson, Urban Renaissance, commissioned by Calling the Shots and Firstborn Creatives*

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Making it work:

An enquiry into how companies in the community media sector recruit and retain skilled freelancers

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## **Preface**

This report is a timely and original development in the analysis of social interest creative practice. It takes the debate much further than merely exploring the merits of such projects, and directly provides an analysis of the economic and skills base for this area of work – the area of community media activity within the creative industries.

According to the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the creative industries are now one of the fastest growing sectors in the British economy, and socially aware creative practice is now gaining a stronger profile and being taken seriously by a wide range of cultural agencies. We feel this report provides an important step in recognising not only the economic realities of these community minded organisations via case studies of the companies themselves and the freelancers they employ, but also charts the average skills contained in this community media/arts field of work, and highlights its future sustainability.

This report has been designed to be not only illuminating, but also be useful. It will be of interest to stakeholders of community based media & arts activity, including project facilitators, managers, funders and policy makers, and also for areas such as careers advice and academic fields such as media studies and social policy. Hopefully this report will provide a platform from which to make informed decisions with confidence, from which the sub-sector of community based media education activity can strategically grow and flourish.

Shawn Sobers, Steve Gear

January 2007

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## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Research Context**

This research looks at small community media companies based in and around Bristol. These independent companies use new media technologies to work in schools, community halls and other such settings, working in a participative, inclusive manner. Bristol has seen such companies play a significant growing role in the cultural landscape of how diverse communities are engaged in activities supporting a wide range of cultural and social agendas (including, education, regeneration, community cohesion and vocational skills building).

This research will explore the economic sustainability of these companies in relation to their capacity to retain skilled community media freelancers, who currently are employed on a short-term/contract basis. The need for this research arose because these companies were concerned that, in the existing legislative context, they could be penalised by the Inland Revenue if they frequently employ the same freelancers. While these companies depend on the skills the freelancers offer they are often unable to offer them long-term work and risk losing them to other jobs or industries. By examining the structure and unique characteristics of this sector, the intention of this research project is to unearth strategies and models of best practice, in relation to these companies to help them to address issues of capacity, retention and expansion.

### **Research Question**

How can small companies in the community media sector recruit/retain their skilled freelancers considering the context of the existing legislative frameworks?

### **Research Aims & Objectives**

The purpose of this research is to support community media (CM) companies to achieve long-term economic and business sustainability through improved recruitment/retention of freelancers. Through this research it is hoped to gain a better understanding of community media, a rapidly growing sector of work within the creative industries. It is important to note that this research is not about the quality or content of the work produced, but instead the emphasis is on the business models and skills utilised by the community media sector. The research report is organised in four sections, each exploring different aspects of the research question:

1. Context: What is the existing legislative framework and where does the community media sector fit in this?
2. Community Media Freelancers: Building up a profile of the freelancers working in the community media sector - what specialist skills are required, what skills do they have and what are their training needs?
3. Best Practice: Are there examples emerging of best practice for recruiting/retaining freelancers?
4. Options for the Future: What can community media companies do to improve their sustainability through recruiting/retaining sufficient freelancers?

### **Research Methods**

In order to identify the answers to these key questions the research methods used included qualitative and quantitative approaches:

1. **Research into the legislative and the wider media industry context**
  - Desk research into the legislative context

- Telephone interview with a representative of Skillset - the sector skills council for the audio-visual industries.

## **2. Qualitative research into CM companies and freelancers**

- In-depth interviews with 4 South West community media companies
- Case study – based on an in-depth interview with ACTA, an established Bristol-based arts charity
- In-depth interviews 9 community media freelancers from a range of backgrounds and experiences.

## **3. Quantitative research into the specific skills of CM freelancers**

- Skills audits with 9 community media freelancers
- Skills audit with 1 non-community media freelancer

### **Partners and Other Organisations Involved**

Calling The Shots and Firstborn Creatives commissioned this piece of research looking into small community media companies in the South West region. It is funded by: the University of the West of England (UWE), South West Screen (SWS) and ABI Associates (ABI) through 'Working Broadband', an European Union funded initiative aimed at making sustainable businesses in new media.

The research was commissioned to support these innovative media companies to grow and develop long-term economic and business sustainability. The four community media companies involved in this research are:

- Calling The Shots (CTS): a media production company
- Firstborn Creatives (FBC): a media production company
- Suited and Booted (S&B): a not-for-profit digital film and video company
- Knowle West Media Centre (KWMC): a community-based media arts charity

### **SECTION ONE: CONTEXT**

*What is the existing legislative framework and where does the community media sector fit in this?*

#### **Overview of the Legislative Framework**

The three main areas of the legislative framework that are of specific relevance to this research:

1. Employing Freelancers
2. Business Development Support
3. Professional Bodies

The initial desk research was wide ranging - one of the key features of the community media sector is that it does not fit easily into any one category; it impacts on and across a number of other sectors, such as:

- |                    |                   |  |
|--------------------|-------------------|--|
| ➤ Mainstream Media | ➤ Education       | ➤ Social Enterprise                      |
| ➤ The Arts         | ➤ Action Research | ➤ Charity/Voluntary/<br>Community Sector |
| ➤ Training         | ➤ Regeneration    |  |

#### **Community Media Sector & Stakeholders**

One of the first tasks was to define the community media sector and identify its key stakeholders. The definition below, is based on a statement from the Community

Media Association website and has been modified to reflect the comments and suggestions by the community media professionals and practitioners who participated in the research:

*The community media sector gives access to voices from the community and encourages diversity, creativity and participation. The sector creates opportunities for a broad range of communities and individuals to participate in and learn about all levels of media production. Combining social enterprise, creative content production and skills for the digital economy, the sector has a vital role in reaching out to people and communities at risk of exclusion and disadvantage.*

The key stakeholders identified in the community media sector are:

- The clients who fund and commission community media projects
- The companies who are funded/commissioned to produce projects
- The freelancers who are hired to deliver projects
- The agencies who support/train/advise the companies and freelancers

Unlike the mainstream media, the community media sector has a social agenda, and so the final key stakeholders are:

- The communities and individuals who benefit from these projects.

### **Characteristics of CM Companies**

In order to identify the position of the sector in the existing legislative framework it is necessary to define the business characteristics of companies in the sector. The following characteristics have been identified through the in-depth interviews with the companies:

- All of the companies had social/ethical motivations either explicitly stated in their governing documents or implicit in their corporate identity.
- The companies' specialist areas included at least two or more of the following: production, training, education, research, media and/or arts.
- All of the companies frequently hire specialist freelancers for particular projects. Freelancer fees make up the largest single area of expenditure.
- All of the companies interviewed in the research fitted the following:
  - 0 – 7 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees,
  - An annual turnover of between £80,000 - £250,000,
  - Expenditure is between 68 – 100% of annual turnover
  - Workflow is project-by-project often with many running concurrently
  - Have been operating for between 6 and 10 years.
- Depending on the sources of income the companies had chosen differing legal structures:
  - Where the primary source of income was grant funding the companies were limited by guarantee un/registered charities or constituted not-for-profit.
  - Where the primary source of income was commissioning/contracting, the companies' legal structures were incorporated media production companies limited by shares.

### **Description of Community Media Companies**

The community media companies interviewed in this study were all small companies

with an explicit/implicit social agenda, this broadly fits the description of 'social enterprise'. Social enterprises employ ethical business practices and benefit society through reinvesting surpluses and/or addressing social or environmental issues within the community. The document 'A Guide to Social Enterprise', published by the Social Enterprise Coalition, uses the terms 'double' or 'triple bottom line' – to describe the dual or triple aims of the enterprise to meet its financial, social and/or environmental goals.

Social enterprises tackle a wide range of issues and operate in all parts of the economy, in this case it would be as part of the media industry. There is no set legal structure for a social enterprise - this is reflected by the community media companies interviewed which included combinations of incorporated and unincorporated companies, Limited by shares and Limited by guarantee, not-for-profit and charitable.

⇒ *See Appendix C for details of the Small Business Service document entitled 'Legal structures for social enterprises at a glance'.*

### **Position in the Legislative Framework**

Based on the community media companies involved in this study, the sector fits the three areas identified earlier of the existing legislative framework in the following ways:

#### **1. Employing Freelancers:**

There does exist legislative guidance from the Inland Revenue about hiring freelancers. The UK film industry has negotiated with the Inland Revenue and defined a list of agreed media professionals job titles, specifying how long they can work for a company without losing their status as self-employed freelancers.

⇒ *See Appendix C for details of the Inland Revenue document 'Film Industry Guidelines 2003'.*

#### **2. Business Development and Support:**

Community media companies can get business development support which is relevant and appropriate to their business needs. This is available from a number of agencies who offer advice specific to small firms, social enterprises and the voluntary/charity sector.

⇒ *See Appendix C for a list of Business Development and Support Agencies for Small Firms, Social Enterprises and Voluntary Organisations.*

#### **3. Professional Bodies:**

Community media companies can get advice, support and national representation for the work that they do from Skillset, BECTU, PACT and South West Screen. These organisations offer legal advice, training, and professional development specific to and represent the interests of freelancers and companies in the media industry. The Community Media Association is a national professional body representing the interests of the community media sector.

⇒ *See Appendix C for a list of Professional Bodies for the Media Industry & the Community Media Sector*

### **Summary of Findings**

Given the outlined characteristics of the community media companies involved in the research, the position of the sector in the existing legislative framework would be best described as a cluster of social enterprises within the media industry.



## **SECTION TWO: COMMUNITY MEDIA FREELANCERS**

*Building up a profile of the freelancers working in the community media sector - what specialist skills are required, what skills do they have and what are their training needs?*

This section builds up a profile of the freelancers from the findings of the company/ freelancer in-depth interviews and the skills and experience audit. Nine community media freelancers contributed to the in-depth interviews (1 – 2 hours each). The skills and experience audit took place at the end of the in-depth interviews, the interviewees were asked to score his or her level of skill and experience.

⇒ See Appendix A for the detailed findings from the in-depth interviews.

⇒ See Appendix B for a full explanation of the scoring process.

The community media freelancers were identified from recommendations from both the companies and the individuals working in the sector. They were selected to reflect a range of experiences:

- From newcomers to established practitioners in the community media sector
- From those who worked purely in community media, to those who worked in both mainstream and community media
- From the spectrum of community media specific and broader media skills
- Different methods of accessing careers in the community media sector

In order to identify the specialist skills of the community media freelancers, one non-community media freelancer contributed to the skills audit. The non-community media freelancer, works in the mainstream media industry, and was selected to mirror the profile of an early to mid-career community media freelancer.

### **Skills & Experience Required**

The community media companies interviewed listed the following top five skills (one being the most important) and experience they require from the freelancers that they hire. The results are grouped by company to emphasise the different terms used to describe the skills and experience required; and, are listed in the order given to demonstrate each company's order of priority:

Company A	Company B
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Creativity</li> <li>2. Self-directed</li> <li>3. Instructional - ability to deal with a range of people</li> <li>4. Flexibility &amp; adaptability</li> <li>5. Professional - produce work of a high standard</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Multi-skilled</li> <li>2. Resourceful</li> <li>3. Ability to engage others in the creative process</li> <li>4. Team workers</li> <li>5. Understanding child protection issues</li> </ol>
Company C	Company D
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sound technical practice</li> <li>2. Project management</li> <li>3. Teaching &amp; communication skills</li> <li>4. Awareness of socially engaged practice</li> <li>5. Team-working</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Groupwork</li> <li>2. Pre-production</li> <li>3. Production Skills</li> <li>4. Post-production</li> <li>5. Organised, reliable, punctual</li> </ol>

Some of the comments that the companies made regarding how they identify a freelancer who has these qualities:

- Look for experience and skills in their chosen practice - look at CVs and examples from their own work/practice for quality.
- Sound technical skills demonstrated by experience in mainstream media industry. Examples of work. Broadcast quality skills.
- Commitment to socially engaged practice and ability to work collaboratively with a range of people.
- Often appoint two freelancers per project to reflect and cover the broad range of skills required.

### Profile of Community Media Freelancers

Personal	The majority of the freelancers interviewed were in their early to mid thirties and had been working in the industry for between two and five years.
Motivations	All of the freelancers interviewed had strong ethical motivations for being in the community media sector. The freelancers enjoyed the work they do and felt that they were learning skills through experience.
Work	'Community media freelancer' covered a multitude of different job titles. The freelancers described the work they do in different ways – from facilitator to cinematographer. This reflected the broad range of skills and tasks that they were accomplished in.
Workflow	All of the freelancers commented on the unpredictable workflow – fluctuating from extremely busy to quiet. Comments included that this made it difficult to plan their work schedule in advance, often having to turn down work from other sources. Those with children found it difficult to manage their childcare needs.
Finances	The majority of the freelancers earned between £7,000 and £12,000 from community media work. Most supplemented their income with other jobs/work outside of the community media sector.
Qualifications	All of the freelancers interviewed were highly qualified. All were educated to degree level or higher, and the majority had attended University as mature students.

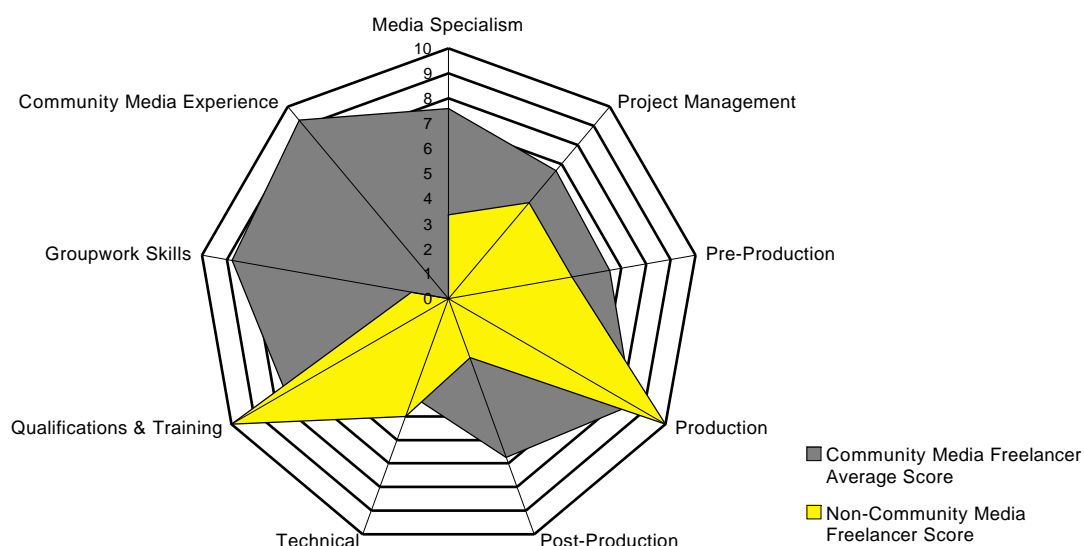
### Key Issues of Concern Highlighted by the Freelancers

The freelancers repeatedly highlighted the following concerns:

- There is a glass ceiling for experienced freelancers: once they reached a certain level they have difficulties progressing professionally – negative perceptions of the sector mean that it is hard to move into mainstream media industry.
- Projects are not realistic and do not match the ambitions: often freelancers are not involved at the proposal development/planning stages and as a result the budgets do not accurately reflect the amount of time that freelancers need to put in.
- Insufficient support in the work place: when working with non-professionals, e.g. children and young people, there needs to be a support worker who is known and trusted by these groups to help manage their behaviour.

## Skills & Experience Audit

The mean average score for community media freelancers (CM) from the skills and experience audit was 66, compared to the non-community media freelancer's (NON-CM) score of 42. The radar graph below illustrates the difference between the (mean average) community freelancers' skills base compared to the non-community media freelancers' skills base.



This graph shows that the NON-CM skills and experience are much more focused on one area of the media process. Because this graph is an average of the community media freelancers' scores it does not reflect the individual media skills which tended to be higher in two or more aspects of the media production process. It does however demonstrate the trend that the CM freelancers' skills are broader and less specialised in any one area.

## Earnings

Freelancers' annual earnings from **community media** work:

<i>Annual Earnings from CM:</i>	£7 – 10k	£11 – 15k	£16 – 20k
<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	4	3	1

Freelancers' **total annual earnings** from both community media & non-community media work:

<i>Total Annual Earnings:</i>	Under £10k	£12 – 13k	£16 – 17k	£21k
<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	1	4	2	2

## Training Needs

The freelancers' training needs were diverse reflecting their skills and experiences in different areas. Suggestions included:

Teaching methodologies and teacher training	Social and emotional development	Youth work - theoretical & practical
Broadcast overview & experience	Teaching techniques for special needs	Business training - being self-employed
Camera, Avid and other technical skills	Ethics of working with young people in the media	Software training

## Summary of the Findings

From the research findings, community media freelancers are highly motivated and talented individuals with a broad range of skills and experience covering a wider number of media skills than non-community media freelancers.

### **SECTION THREE: BEST PRACTICE**

*Are there examples emerging of best practice for recruiting/retaining freelancers?*

#### **ACTA – A Case Study**

ACTA was selected to be the case study because, like the companies involved in this study, ACTA is heavily dependent on highly skilled, creative freelancers.

⇒ See Appendix C for the full details of the ACTA case study.

ACTA is an arts/theatre charity which has been delivering arts projects in and around Bristol for over 20 years. ACTA has social objectives – it is “...committed to increasing access to the arts, and to individual and community development through participation.”

Because ACTA's income is generated entirely from grant funding, the organisation is a registered charity and Limited by Guarantee. ACTA is a large organisation compared to the community media companies in this research – ACTA's annual income for the last four to five years has been between 400k – 450k.

A high proportion of ACTA's expenditure is freelancers' fees. Their pay structure is very simple, they pay freelancers a fixed daily rate of £150. ACTA has an extensive database of freelancers - there are about 50 on the books at any one time. Once a year they advertise for new people. From this call for freelancers they sift through the CVs. At this stage they are looking for skills and experience in the following:

1. Facilitation
2. Skills in chosen artform - something to offer
3. Commitment to participatory work
4. Sense of fun - ability to improvise, able to cope and make things happen
5. Determination

The short listed applicants are then informally interviewed. The successful candidates join the freelance database and are offered training in child protection and are CRB checked. As and when work comes up suitable candidates from the database are selected and contacted.

This structure is an example of best practice because it is clear and defined:

- Through providing open methods of recruiting new freelancers it enables access points to freelance work. Contracting them on a freelance basis removes the expectation of guaranteed work.
- Having this recruitment structure ensures that all freelancers meet a minimum standard. Pay policy and employment contracts enable freelancers to understand what is required of them.
- Having a regularly updated database of skilled freelancers distances the individual freelancers from the fluctuations in the workflow because ACTA is less dependent on a small number of 'trusted' freelancers to undertake work.

#### **Summary of Findings**

ACTA's model of practice is a good example of how to recruit and retain freelancers because it is clear and defined. It offers the freelancers training opportunities, a simple pay structure and an open application process for freelancers to get involved.

## **SECTION FOUR: OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

*What can community media companies do to improve their sustainability through recruiting/retaining sufficient freelancers?*

### **SWOT Analysis**

These have been identified from the interviews with the companies (including ACTA), the freelancers and Skillset.

<b>Strengths:-</b>	<b>Weaknesses:-</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly motivated, multi-talented freelancers</li> <li>• Good links to the Universities and other training organisations in Bristol</li> <li>• 'Learning-by-doing' opportunity open to a wide range of people</li> <li>• Working in a different way to the mainstream media industry – more process rather than product orientated.</li> <li>• Highly experienced and capable community media companies</li> <li>• An access point to the mainstream media industries for new talent from a number of diverse backgrounds</li> <li>• Flexible working arrangements for freelancers</li> <li>• Freelancers have a broad range of skills and experience</li> <li>• Freelancers group work skills are more highly developed than freelancers in mainstream media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not attracting new talented freelancers. Companies need a regular influx of highly skilled freelancers to lead projects</li> <li>• Unstructured volunteer work and training opportunities</li> <li>• Lower pay and smaller budgets for productions than mainstream media industry</li> <li>• Glass-ceiling for experienced community media freelancers</li> <li>• No opportunities to archive/showcase the work being produced</li> <li>• Community media lexicon and jargon not defined</li> <li>• Unpredictable and irregular workflow, often reflecting the clients cash flow – e.g. end of year underspends</li> <li>• There are gaps in the freelancers' knowledge and training. Their media technical skills are not as specialised and developed as freelancers in mainstream media</li> <li>• Daily rates of pay are not formalised, and vary from project to project depending on the clients</li> </ul>
<b>Opportunities:-</b>	<b>Threats:-</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bristol is a centre in the UK for the mainstream media industry</li> <li>• There are a number of community media companies in the South West region.</li> <li>• Movement away from grant-funding to 'contract' based work with public service sector</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Losing trained-up talent to the mainstream media industry</li> <li>• Community media freelancers unable to get sufficient work could start bypassing the companies to get contracts</li> <li>• Workflow is closely linked to the public sector, susceptible to changes in government priorities, policies and trends and reductions in available public sector grant-funding</li> <li>• Negative perception of the community media sector and the quality of work produced</li> <li>• Not recognised by the mainstream media industries and its professional bodies (unions, skills councils, etc.) as a sector</li> </ul>

## Strategies Identified through the SWOT Analysis

The following options are based on the SWOT analysis, and address the two key issues faced by community media companies – the recruitment and retention of freelancers. These options have been considered in relation to the benefits to both the freelancers (F/L) and the companies (COM).

### Objective: To recruit new freelancers to the community media sector

Option	Benefits
CM companies work together to formalise recruitment structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Maintained and updated database of CM freelancers</li> <li>➤ Regular advertised open opportunities to apply to get on the database</li> </ul>	F/L: Access point to CM COM: Attract to new F/Ls to CM F/L: More work available – more sustainable as freelancers COM: Access to ‘tried and tested’ CM freelancers

### Objective: To retain skilled community media freelancers

Option	Benefits
Companies build links with mainstream media: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Encouraging and supporting freelancers to get work in the mainstream industry.</li> <li>➤ Access point for mainstream media organisations to new talent</li> </ul>	F/L: More work available – more sustainable as freelancers F/L: Media skills are raised through experience COM: High quality outputs BOTH: Improved perception of CM
CM companies and freelancers work together to clarify pay structures (daily rates) and contractual agreements such as roles and responsibilities (insurance, health & safety, etc)	F/L: Better understanding of what is expected of them COM: Covered in terms of employment law
Structured professional development and training opportunities for CM freelancers on the database: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Investment accrued by freelancers for training and development e.g. £10 per day worked</li> <li>➤ Build up a directory of providers of services such as accountancy, childcare, self-employment advice, business card printing</li> </ul>	F/L: Ability to get further training and development in CM F/L: Greater understanding of self-employment - more sustainable as freelancers F/L: Would reflect their skills gaps COM: ‘Investors In People’ status for CM companies
Freelancers work together to showcase their CM work and share experiences.	F/L: Learn from each other COM: Higher quality F/Ls
Recognition of the CM sector and of CM freelancers from media professional bodies such as Skillset, BECTU, PACT	F/L: Ability to join workers unions COM: Representation of CM sector & its interests on a national level

## **CONCLUSION**

The community media sector is an emerging sector influenced greatly by the developments and innovations in communication technologies. The companies and freelancers involved in this research study are pioneering participatory practice and opening up access for communities and those on the periphery of our society to media tools. In order to continue to provide this important service it is critical, at this stage, to reflect and review the situation as it currently stands and to make informed decisions on the best way forward.

## **Next Steps**

The purpose of this report was to provide the objective overview to support professionals and practitioners in the community media sector to achieve long-term sustainability. This research paper has focused on one aspect of this - the recruitment and retention of community media freelancers, exploring it from both the companies' and the freelancers' perspectives. Through looking at the wider legislative context, best practice, and doing a SWOT analysis a number of options for the future have been identified. It is now essential that the key players – the companies and freelancers – review the situation and decide how to proceed from here.

## **Acknowledgements**

This research was supported by grants from ABI Associates (ABI), the Bristol School of Art Media and Design at the University of the West of England (UWE) and South West Screen (SWS). A big thank you to all of the freelancers, and the individuals who represented the companies, organisations and agencies who participated in this research. I would also like to thank Steve Gear and Shawn Sobers for their valuable comments and support.

## **Appendices:**

- Appendix A: Findings from Freelancer In-depth Interviews
- Appendix B: Findings from the Skills & Experience Audit
- Appendix C: Other Information



## **Findings from Freelancer Indepth Interviews**

### **Personal Details**

The nine freelancers interviewed were between 25 – 42 years of age.

<i>Age Bracket:</i>	20s	30s	40s
<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	2	6	1

Although the question was not in the interview structure, during the course of some of the interviews whether or not the freelancers had children was discussed.

<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	Children	No Children	Not Discussed
	3	2	4

### **Work**

The freelancers used one or more of the following job titles to describe themselves:

- Filmmaker
- Cinematographer
- Audio-Visual Artist
- Media Educator
- Director
- Facilitator
- Editor
- DVD Creator
- Researcher
- Teacher
- Workshop Leader
- Production Manager
- Director of Photography

The freelancers each used three or more of the terms below to describe the community media work that they do:

Filmmaking	Delivering media projects	Technical skills
Idea development to completion	Collaborative filmmaking	Distribution
Camerawork	Informal courses outside of formal education	Creating music for films
Social work	Supporting young people to edit	Filmmaking with communities
Production management	Editing	DVD authoring
Facilitation and training for non-professionals	Organising seminars	Documenting the process of engagement
Young person as an apprentice	Documentation	Scriptwriting
Teaching	Education – workshops in schools	

They described their community media specialisms as:

Education, training, technical skills; independent & collaborative filmmaking; digital arts, music, media; films, sound, animation, tv; geographical communities; and communities of interest - BME, young people, artists & adults with learning difficulties.

Below are the main reasons the freelancers gave for getting into the sector:

Through a graduate placement scheme.	By accident.	Following a career in social services	Through community theatre projects.
Through a career in the mainstream media industry.	Got interested in it through talk at University.	Through paid and voluntary work during degree.	Made redundant.

Of the 9 freelancers who were interviewed:

- 2 had worked in the sector for less than 1 year
- 5 had worked in the sector 2 – 5 years
- 1 had worked in the sector 6 – 10 years
- 1 had worked in the sector more than 11 years

Below is a selection of the motivations the interviewees stated for getting into the sector:

This line of work means that can continue own practice alongside getting paid to do enjoyable & challenging work.	Learn new skills, experience and purposeful.
Wanted to earn a living from being an artist.	Interested by the ethical dimension of the community media sector.
Media literacy - young people able to question, analyse and participate in media.	Use of digital media as a framework, or language for community empowerment and economic regeneration.
Enjoys the work, finds it rewarding to work with and inspire young people to achieve.	Working in the community media sector is a way of developing career and acquiring new skills.
Interested in media education, education evaluation and research, documentaries.	This line of work means that can continue own work alongside getting paid to do enjoyable & challenging work.
Can do own work, enjoys challenging interesting work.	As an independent filmmaker, had been working unpaid on own projects.
Underpaid but more interesting work than the mainstream media industry.	

### Work Flow

The majority of the freelancers interviewed worked regularly for only one company in the community media sector. All of the freelancers worked for four or fewer community media companies.

The companies and organisations that had hired them on community media projects included:

Calling the Shots, Firstborn Creatives, Knowle West Media Centre, Suited & Booted, ACTA, Rubberductions, Omni Productions, KUMMBA, Watershed, Creative Partnerships, Bristol City Council and LEA, Bristol EAZ, Education Inclusion Department, Excellence in Cities, Government Office South West, South Gloucestershire, Somerset Film & Video, Engine Rooms, Wolf & Water, Brew House Theatre, Somerset Social Services.

Most of the freelancers interviewed got new work through word of mouth – friends, recommendations, track record and contacts. The companies contact the freelancers when they have suitable work coming up. The freelancers are pro-active – researching, networking and seeking new opportunities.

These were the community media freelancer listings/directories that the freelancers knew of:

South West Screen, EAZ people based directory, Spaede – SW education and arts development, Broadcast, Mandy.com, Shooting people, Kays, Freelance Network

All of the freelancers worked on a project-by-project basis, the number of projects per year varied depending on the type:

<i>Type of project:</i>	<i>Short</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Long</i>
Paid days per project	Under 5 days	5 - 15 days	20 - 35 days
Duration of project	-	1 - 6 months	1- 2 years
Number of projects per year	10 - 20	4 - 10	0 - 5

One of the freelancers interviewed works full-time in community media, the rest do other paid and unpaid work outside the community media sector. Other work includes: part-time lecturer, commissions, teaching assistant, independent filmmaking, other media work (e.g. commercial or broadcast), bar work, social work, research/study.

The freelancers describe the flow of freelance community work as fluctuating from very busy to quiet. It is hard to plan other work and childcare advance as the schedule can change up to the last minute. At times they find themselves offered too much work this often correlates with end of financial year underspend.

### Qualifications, Skills & Experience

All of the freelancers were qualified to degree level in subjects that were relevant to community media. Five had been mature students, at least one had won awards for photography and short film work.

Below is a selection of qualifications either held or being undertaken by community media freelancers:

Film & photography degree	Timebased Media degree	Access Course
Cultural & Media Studies degree	Sociology degree	HNC in Applied Arts
PGCE	City & Guilds in delivering teaching	Music Technology Degree
MA research and digital media.	Film and video production – Cinematography degree	Post Graduate Diploma in Media Production

All of the freelancers have or have had experience of voluntary work, most regularly donate extra (unpaid) to the projects that they work on. These are some of the benefits that the freelancers gained from doing unpaid voluntary work:

- Builds trust in the freelancer's abilities, quality of work and skills.
- Learn technical and professional skills by watching and volunteering
- Access point to paid work in the community media

The freelancers listed the top three skills (in order of importance) that they are asked to use or find most useful when they are working in community media.

<i>Number 1</i>	<i>Number 2</i>	<i>Number 3</i>
Editing.	DVD authoring.	Facilitating/instructing.
Ability to improvise.	Enthusiasm for technology & technical skills.	Accept the unexpected & deal with it.
Use of storytelling narrative.	Networking for work.	Comprehensive knowledge of the whole range of production.
Basic editing, camera work & teaching.	Advanced editing.	Music.
People skills.	Camerawork.	Organised.
Technical & instructional skills.	Personal skills – able to work with a range of people.	Easy to work with – not ego driven.
Turn a challenging brief into an involving engaging box ticker. Interpret a brief in a creative way.	Producing/production skills budgeting and delivering – make it happen.	Support people from a range of skills and backgrounds to develop their ideas and make into a reality.
Good communication skills – with a range of people.	Flexibility/adaptability.	Empathy – ability to get people on board and engaged in projects.
Organisational.	Managing people.	Comprehensive knowledge of the media sector - understanding technical specifications and schedules.

The majority of the freelancers interviewed had no formal social/community qualifications but a lot of experience. These are their suggestions for skills and experiences that help when working with people from a range of backgrounds:

Ability to be constructively critical.	Experience/understanding of social work.	Enabling, supporting friendship & team-working.
Motherhood.	Using humour to engage.	Ability to listen.
Ability to improvise - involves being able to think on feet - be flexible.	Started by assisting, learnt about skills with support from professionals.	Extensive experience - a range of ethnicities, ages, communities.
Learning by doing – through experience.	Ability to form a working relationship.	Ability to make an experience accessible - not intimidating.
Being empathetic and tolerant.	Being aware of child protection issues.	

### Training Needs & Professional Development

The freelancers were asked were they ever asked to do things that they don't feel confident to do? The responses were varied and reflected their expertise and experiences. Below is a selection of their responses and suggestions:

Need a youth work professional present during the projects who is known and trusted by the young people and is trusted by them to be able to calm them and to curb unacceptable behaviour.	To minimize risks the work space needs to be a controlled one – for health and safety of both the young people and the professionals. This also means having staff who know how to manage the young peoples' behaviour.	Would like to get more training – working with the 7 – 11 primary aged children – different way of working – need to be disciplinary, know how to structure a session, how to engage a group – basic teaching methods.
To do projects and confidently it requires support from the commissioning client's side. It is difficult where the client has not provided a named contact who is interested in the project, understands it, and is prepared to support the implementation.	Drained by working with disaffected teenagers. Need a responsible professional who knows and is trusted by the young people involved. Some youth work training would be helpful to speak the context & how to communicate with youth workers.	Not happy about some of the work that have been receiving – where the client is asking for a particular outcome – for instance to advertise a public service. Low budget advertising/propaganda for public services. Feel is ethically and morally wrong.
Often feel apprehensive before a job starts because always unknown quantities – new people, new skills and systems etc.	Need clear project objectives and an understanding of the different roles and responsibilities of the different professionals working on a project.	Would like to get more training – teacher training and build confidence to teach/instruct technical skills to other people.

Below are some of the areas that the freelancers are interested in getting training or studying further:

Teaching methodologies and teacher training	Social and emotional development	Youth work - theoretical & practical
Broadcast overview & experience	Teaching techniques for special needs	Business training - being self-employed
Camera, avid and other technical skills	Ethics of working with young people in the media	Software training

Production management	Social research	Assertiveness
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The freelancers put forward some ideas of ways to support their professional development:

Access to mainstream media experience.	Apprenticeships.	Distribution of finished work.
Archive of community media projects.	Freelancers share project notes and templates.	Case studies based on freelancers' experiences.
Careers advice.	Supervision - feed back on work and guidance.	Accredited courses: child protection, first aid, fire safety, health and safety.
Acknowledgement of skills.	Opportunities to work with other employers in the sector.	Ongoing training.

### Financial/Business/Tax

The freelancers got between **40 – 120 paid days** of work per year in **community media**.

The daily labour rates varied from contract to contract. Of the freelancers interviewed, the daily rates fell into 3 categories:

- Under £100
- £133 - £150 - average daily rate bracket
- £175 - £200

Freelancers' annual earnings from **community media** work:

<i>Annual Earnings from CM:</i>	£7 – 10k	£11 – 15k	£16 – 20k
<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	4	3	1

Freelancers' annual earnings from **non-community media** work:

<i>Annual Earnings from non-CM:</i>	£0 – 1k	£5 – 6k	£10k
<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	4	4	1

Freelancers' **total annual earnings** from both community media & non-community media work:

<i>Total Annual Earnings:</i>	Under £10k	£12 – 13k	£16 – 17k	£21k
<i>No. of Freelancers:</i>	1	4	2	2

The majority (seven out of nine) freelancers estimated their **annual business expenditure** to be between £1000 and £3000.

All met the Inland Revenue's self-employment criteria. All of the freelancers interviewed were currently operating as sole traders. The consensus was that there was not enough work to justify any other legal status.

- None of the freelancers have made provision for holiday pay, sick pay or public liability insurance.
- All do their own tax self-assessment, most have friends and family contacts who can give them informal advice.
- One has an accountant and another is in the process of finding an accountant.
- The companies provide CRB clearance for the freelancers.
- All freelancers have necessary equipment to work from home and hire equipment when required.

The trade and professional journals, newspapers that the freelancers read, include:

Guardian Monday, Broadcast, Screen International, Arial, Guardian Monday, Broadcast Rez Mag, and Digital Art AVID bulletins, Broadcast, & Freelance Spaede Network Broadcast, Guardian Media & Education supplements, ACE jobs list American Cinematographer, Showreel Magazine.

### Issues Highlighted by the Freelancers

Do not have the time being informed about how to deal with tax as a self-employed person.	Concerns were raised about the tax implications of being dependent on one company for the majority of freelance work.
The work is fragmented – contracts often start a job without a contract. The number of paid days don't reflect the true amount of work required.	Would like to be a member of a BECTU, but currently but the member agreement doesn't fit the community media work available in terms of working hours and minimum pay.
Managing time and other commitments is difficult – as hours fluctuate depending on the production – difficult balancing childcare issues with commitment to projects.	There can be a conflict of interests – where the organisations are struggling to survive they are often dependent on freelancers to generate cash and expect a lot for free.
The method for calculating daily rates of pay are not clear and can be dramatically different – depending on the project.	Balancing community media work with other work is difficult, have loyalty to the community media sector but need other work.

### Solutions Highlighted by Freelancers

Business advice, training and support. Recommendations for accountancies.	Pro-active about getting work – asking people, putting out feelers, networking.	Documentation & evaluation – not for the funders benefit but for the practitioners.
Co-ordinated approach to support for freelancers.	Access to other peoples' experiences & Information sharing.	A broader selection of work from more employers.
Support to be self-employed – to help get through the bureaucracy and paper work.	Freelancers need to work together – learn from each other.	Involvement at the fundraising project planning stage.
More involvement from the client with the project briefing before a job starts, observing during & feedback after.	Awareness raising on the communities participating – such as particular etiquette.	Clearer and more realistic proposals - reflecting the amount of work and money a project takes.

## **Findings from the Freelancer Skills & Experience Audit**

The freelancers' level of skills and experience were assessed and scored by the freelancers themselves with the support of the interviewer. Each subcategory was scored using the scoring systems outlined below, and the score for each category was then totalled up. The total score for each of the nine categories was scaled out of ten. The results for each freelancer are presented in the form of a radar graph.

### **Media Skills**

*Categories 1 – 6 are media related skills used by the freelancers.*

#### **1. Media Specialism**

- i. Audio Media, Music Technology
- ii. Moving Image, Film and Video
- iii. Interactive, Web & Multimedia

#### **2. Project Management**

- i. Fundraising
- ii. Co-ordination
- iii. Planning

#### **3. Pre-Production**

- i. Scriptwriting
- ii. Idea Development

#### **4. Production**

- i. Camera
- ii. Sound
- iii. Directing

#### **5. Post-Production**

- i. Editing
- ii. Effects

#### **6. Technical**

- i. Programming
- ii. Engineering – sound/visuals

Each freelancer assessed his or her own level of skill in each subcategory using the following scoring system:

0	No skills or knowledge
1	No skills but a basic knowledge (understanding of principles)
2	Some basic skills and knowledge
3	Advanced skills and knowledge gained from training or further education
4	Advanced skills and knowledge used in a professional (paid) capacity

### **Qualifications & Training**

*Category 7 looks at the qualifications and training of the freelancers.*

#### **7. Qualifications and Training**

- i. Formal qualifications

This part was scored on the highest qualification held by the freelancers.

0	No formal qualifications
1 - 3	From basic GCSEs, to higher level diplomas etc
4	Qualifications at degree level or higher

- ii. Professional/vocational training

Scored on the amount of training undertaken which is directly relevant to their professional work – such as health and safety, child protection etc. This includes apprenticeships but does not include voluntary work.

0	No training
1 - 3	From some but not enough; to, sufficient to undertake the work required
4	Extensive professional/vocational training

## Community Media Skills & Experience

Categories 8 and 9 are community media skills and experience.

### 8. Groupwork Skills

- i. Ability to run a group
- ii. Ability to assist a group leader
- iii. Confidence to teach technical skills
- iv. Ability stimulate contributions & ideas
- v. Awareness of child protection issues

Each freelancer assessed his or her own level of confidence and experience in each subcategory using the following scoring system:

0	No confidence, no experience
1	Confidence, no experience
2	Confidence & some experience in a professional (paid or voluntary) capacity
3	Confidence & experience in a professional (paid or voluntary) capacity
4	Confidence & extensive experience in a professional (paid) capacity

### 9. Community Media Experience

For each subcategory of categories 1 – 8 the freelancers were asked whether they had had experience in a community media context. For each category where he or she had had community media experience the freelancers scored 1 point, up to a total of 8 points.

#### Scores

Below are the totalled up scores for each category, which have been scaled out of 10.

<i>Freelancer Reference:</i>	<i>CM</i> 1	<i>CM</i> 2	<i>CM</i> 3	<i>CM</i> 4	<i>CM</i> 5	<i>CM</i> 6	<i>CM</i> 7	<i>CM</i> 8	<i>CM</i> 9	<i>NON</i> <i>CM</i>
Media Specialism	6	8	8	8	8	9	5	8	8	3
Project Management	6	9	5	6	6	5	8	7	9	5
Pre-Production	9	8	9	8	4	3	6	8	6	5
Production	8	8	9	8	8	10	8	8	8	10
Post-Production	10	4	4	5	7	10	8	8	6	3
Technical	4	4	1	3	9	5	1	5	6	5
Qualifications & Training	5	10	10	10	5	5	8	10	5	10
Groupwork Skills	10	7	9	10	8	8	10	10	10	2
Community Media Experience	10	10	9	9	10	10	10	6	10	0
<b>Total Score:</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>42</b>

**Average score for community media freelancers:**

**66**

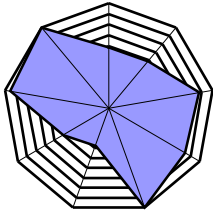
**The score for the non-community media freelancer:**

**42**

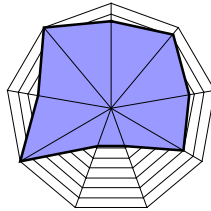


**Overview of the Results**  
*Mapping the Freelancers Skills & Experience*

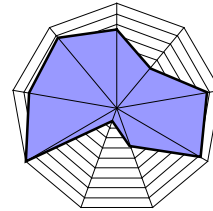
**CM1**



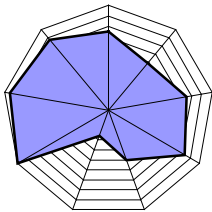
**CM2**



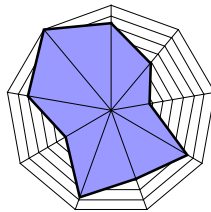
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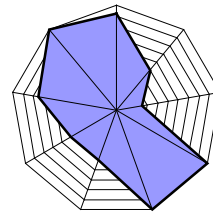
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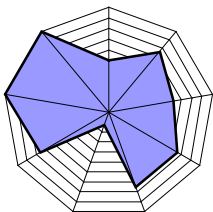
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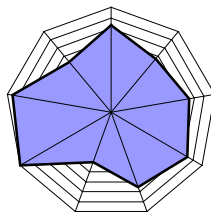
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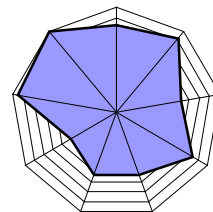
**CM7**



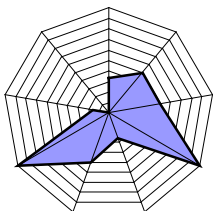
**CM8**



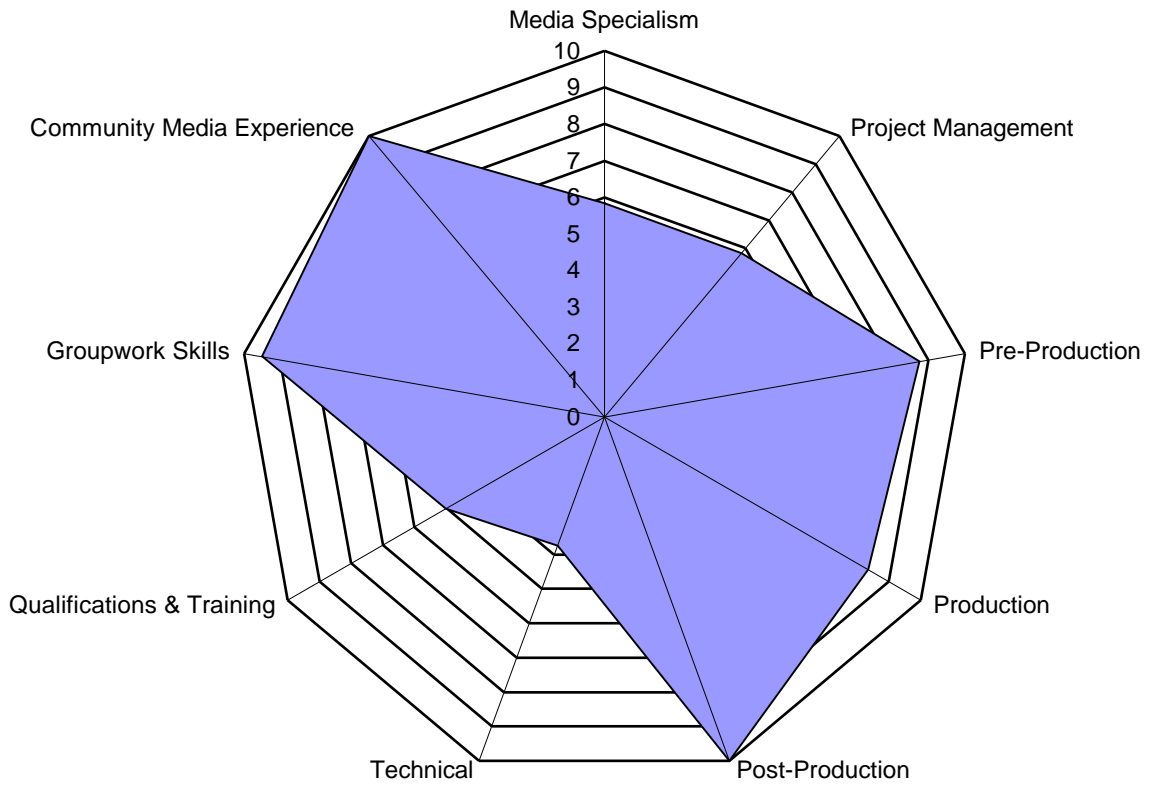
**CM9**



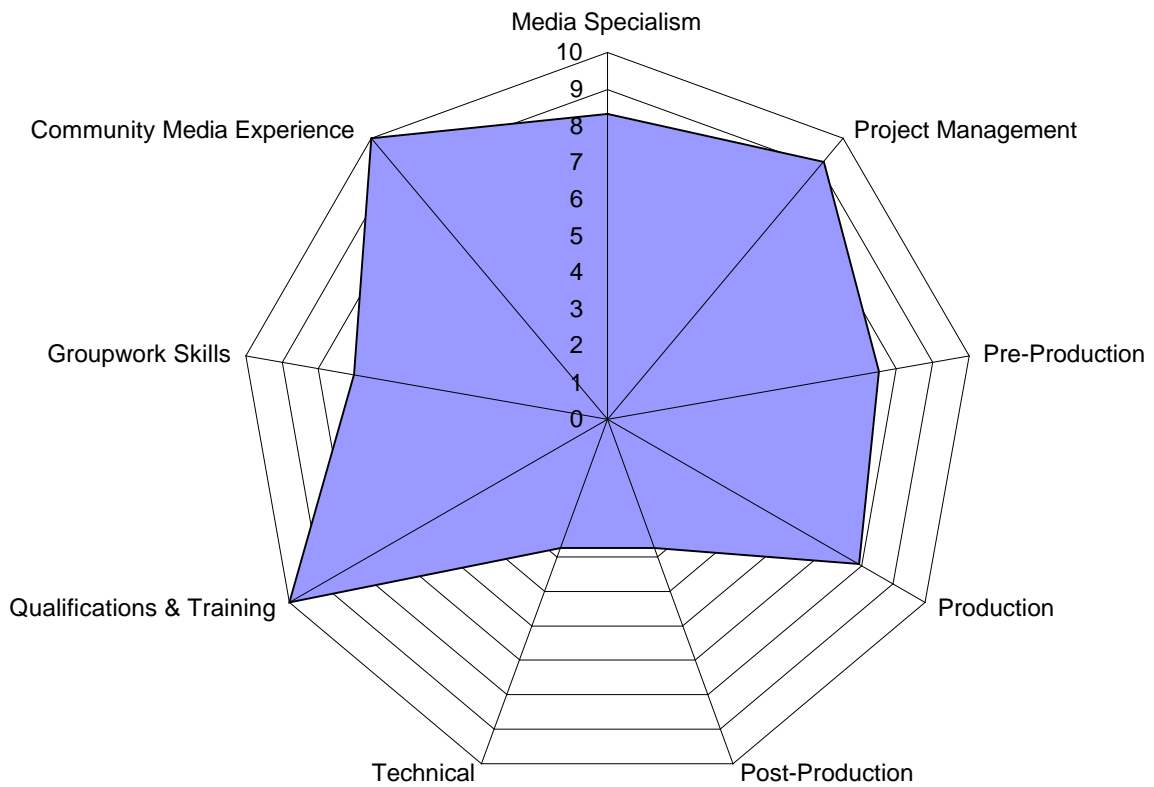
**NON-CM**



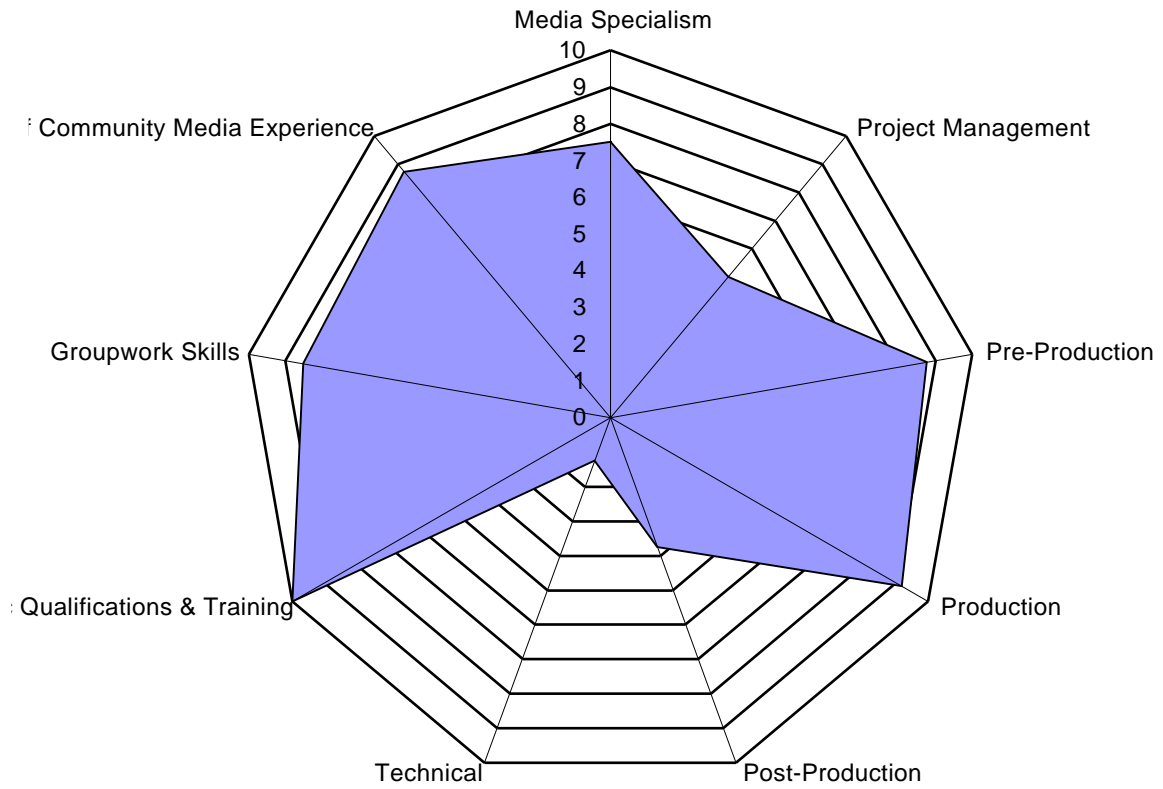
**Community Media Freelancer 1**



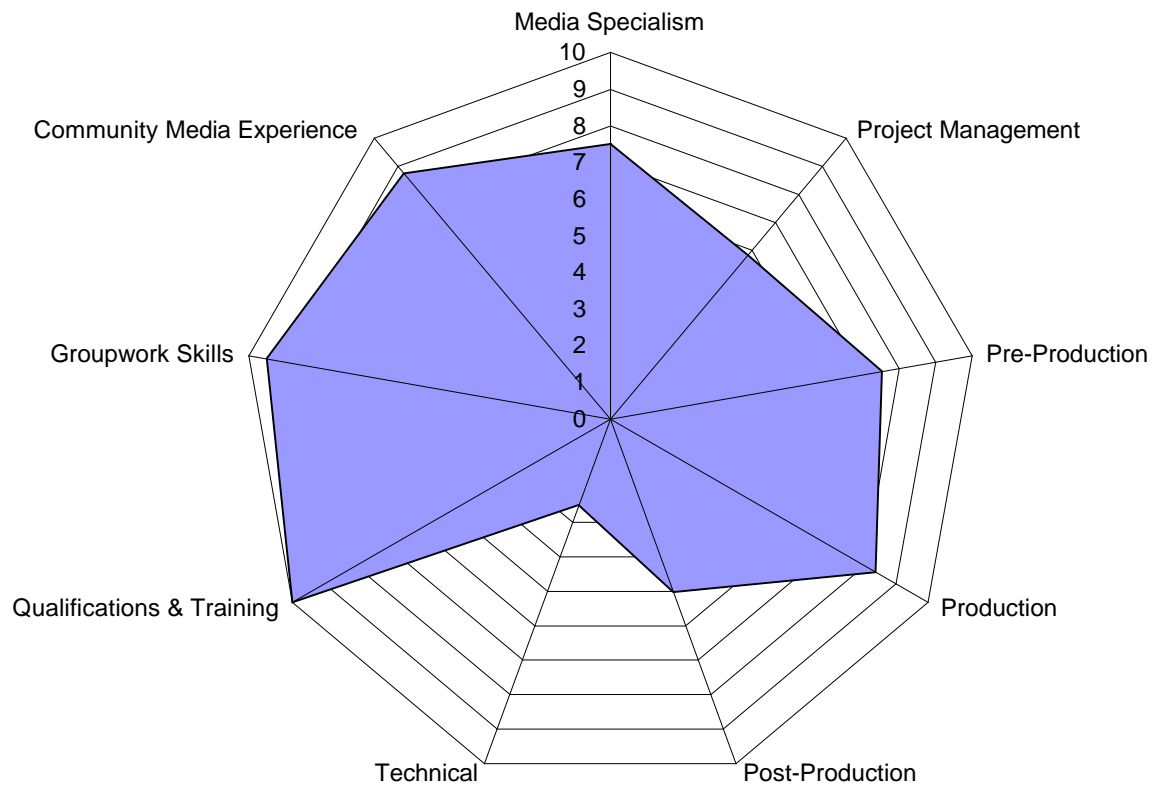
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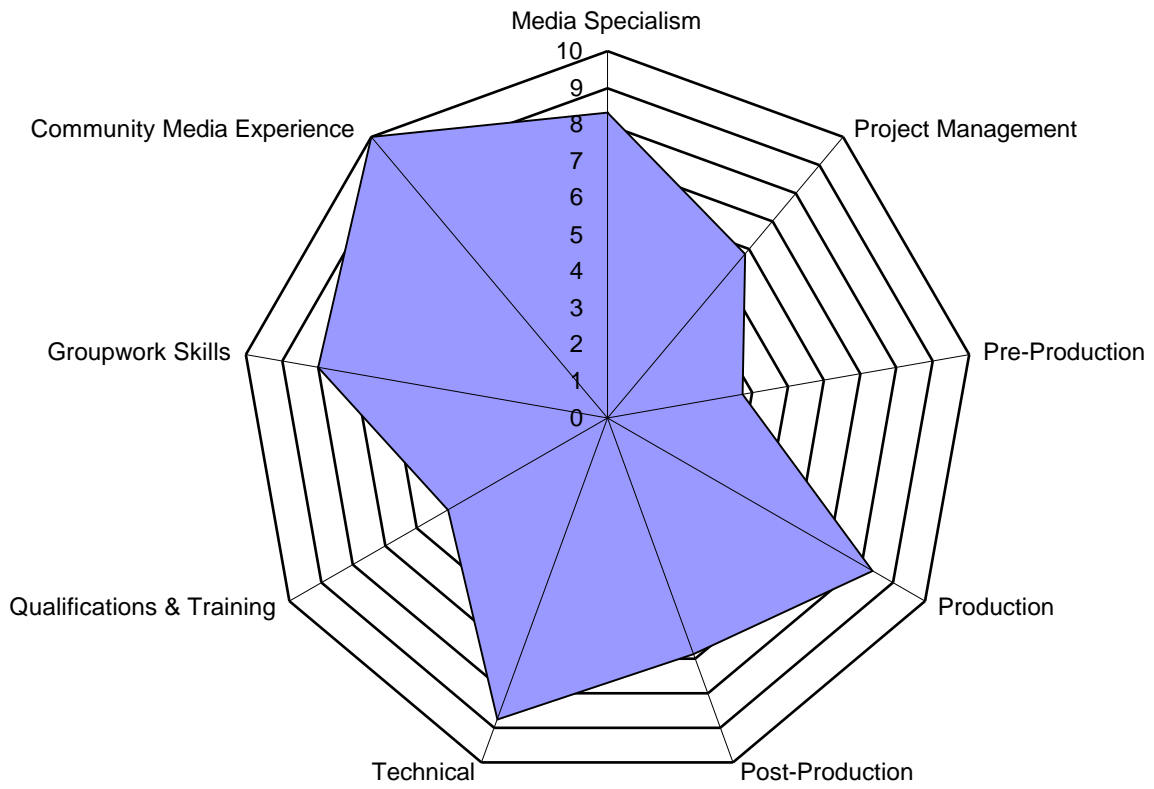
**Community Media Freelancer 3**



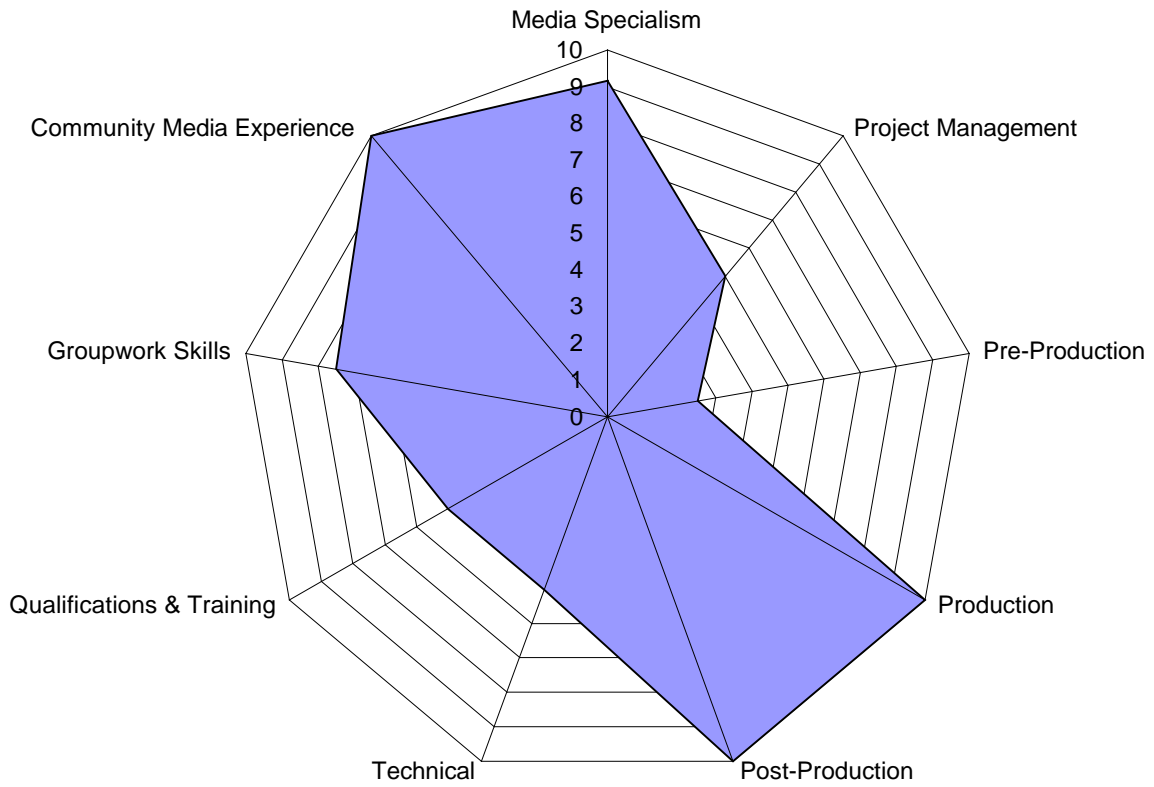
**Community Media Freelancer 4**



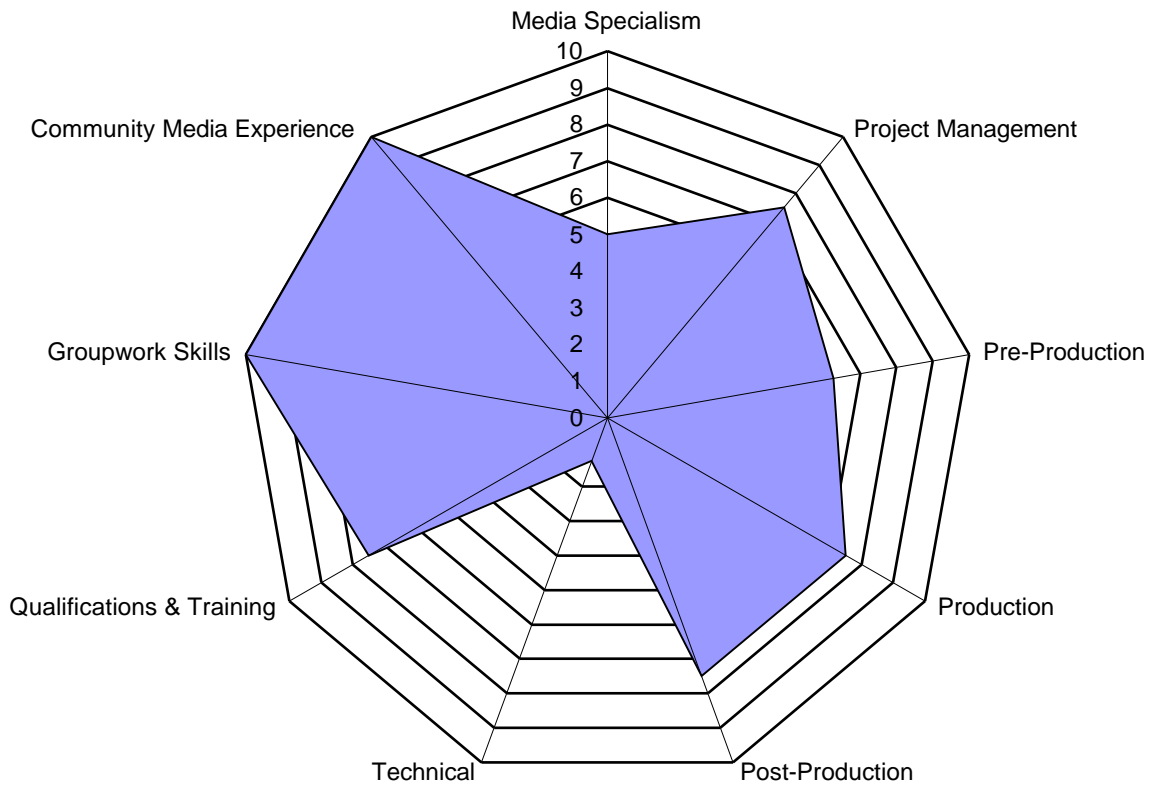
**Community Media Freelancer 5**



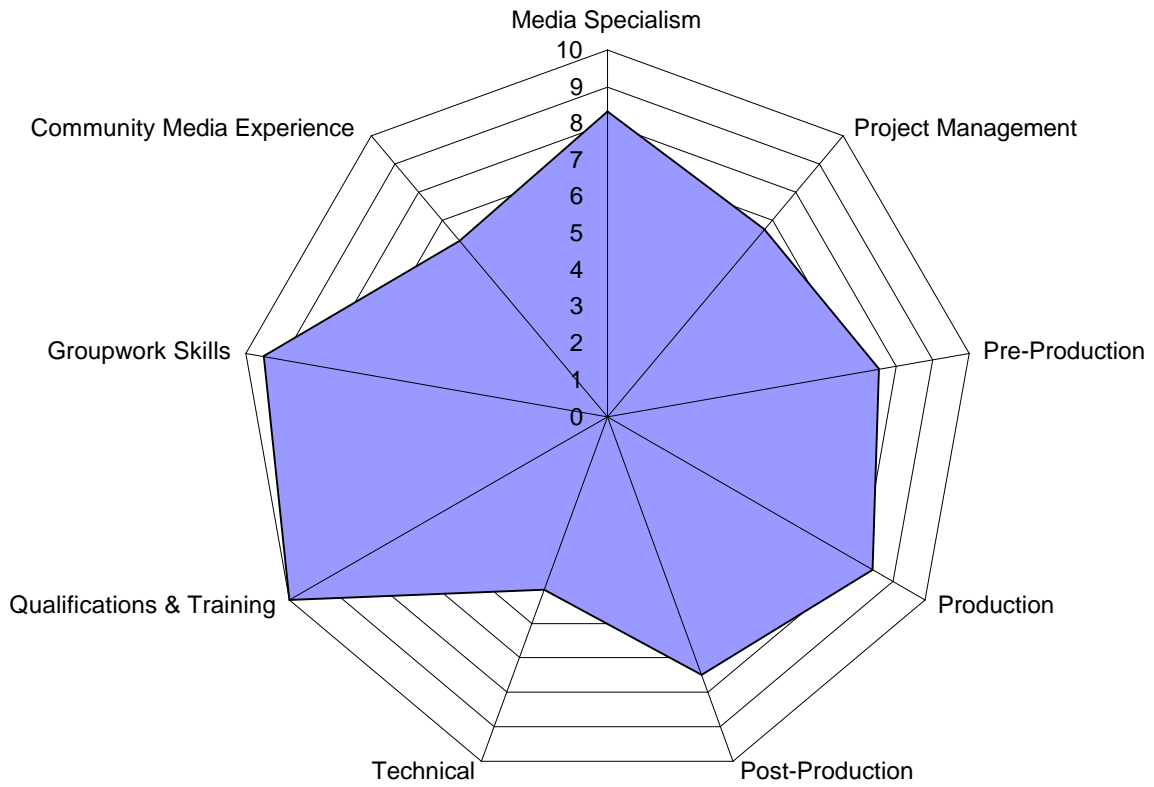
**Community Media Freelancer 6**



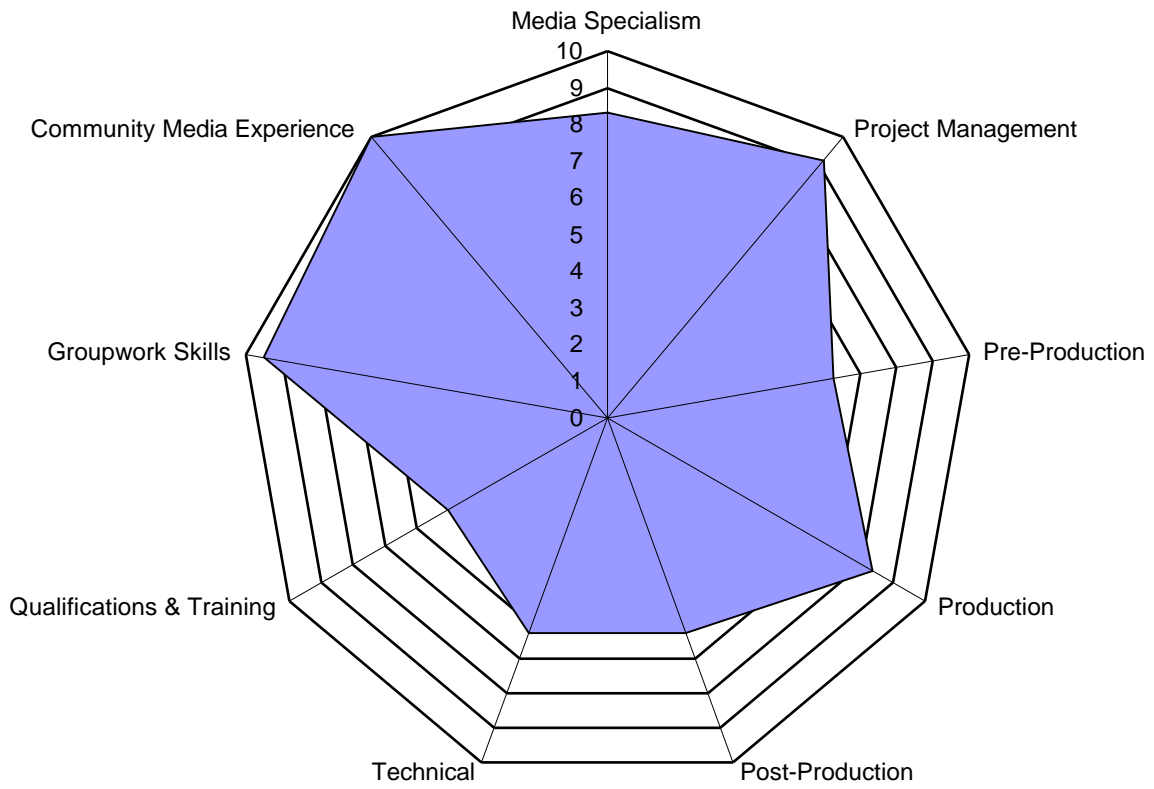
**Community Media Freelancer 7**



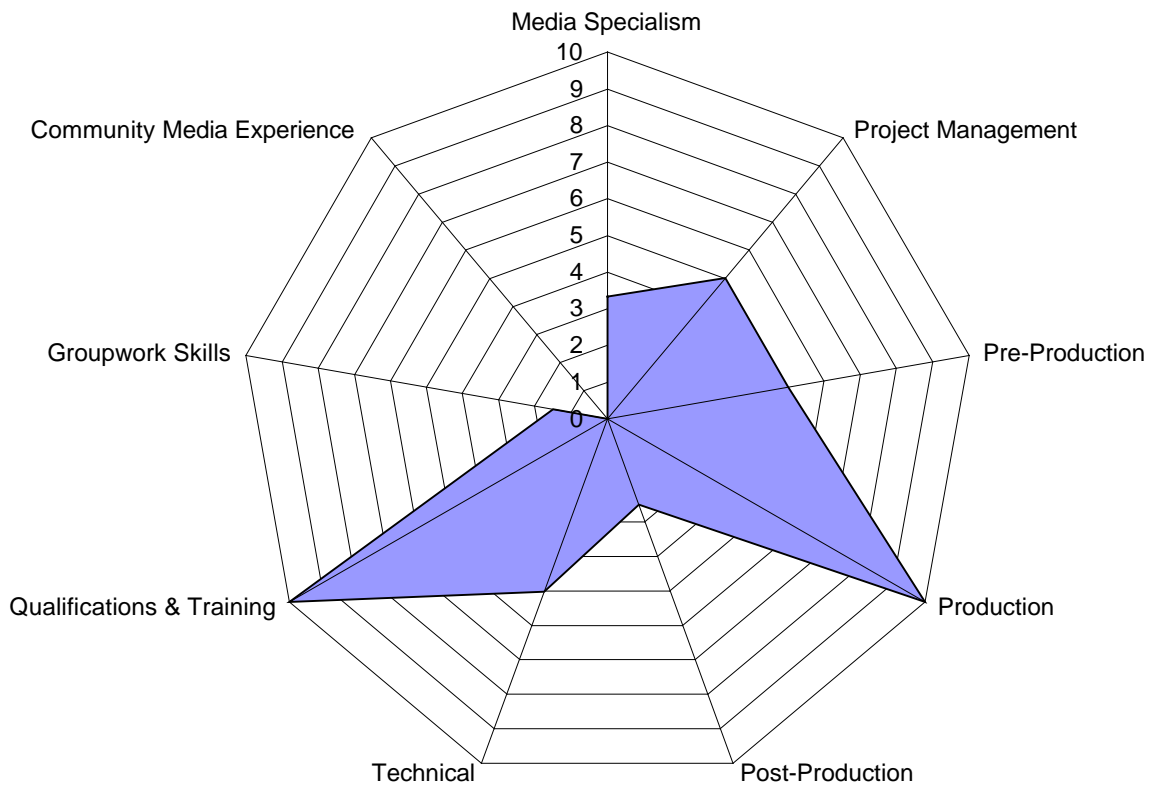
**Community Media Freelancer 8**



**Community Media Freelancer 9**



**Non-Community Media Freelancer**



## **Contents:**

- I. Small Business Service 'Legal Structures for social enterprises at a glance'
- II. Inland Revenue 'Film Industry Guidelines 2003'
- III. Professional Bodies for the Media Industry & the Community Media Sector
- IV. Business Development and Support Agencies for Small Firms, Social Enterprises and Voluntary Organisations
- V. ACTA – A Case Study

### **I. Small Business Service 'Legal Structures for social enterprises at a glance'**

URL: [http://www.sbs.gov.uk/SBS\\_Gov\\_files/socialenterprise/LegalTable.pdf](http://www.sbs.gov.uk/SBS_Gov_files/socialenterprise/LegalTable.pdf)

### **II. Inland Revenue 'Film Industry Guidelines 2003'**

URL: [http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/specialist/fi\\_guidance\\_notes2003.pdf](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/specialist/fi_guidance_notes2003.pdf)

### **III. Professional Bodies for the Media Industry & the Community Media Sector**

**BECTU** (Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union) is the independent union for those working in broadcasting, film, theatre, entertainment, leisure, interactive media and allied areas who are primarily based in the United Kingdom. The union represents permanently employed, contract and freelance workers within these sectors. [www.bectu.org.uk](http://www.bectu.org.uk)

The **Community Media Association** (CMA) is the UK representative body for the Community Media sector and is committed to promoting access to the media for people and communities. It is a non-profit making organisation, supporting Community Radio and Television and community-based Internet projects and representing Community Media to Government, industry and regulatory bodies. [www.commedia.org.uk](http://www.commedia.org.uk)

**Pact** is the UK trade association that represents and promotes the commercial interests of independent feature film, television, animation and interactive media companies. A comprehensive range of support and information services are available to all its members including training, events, business affairs guidance, subsidised legal advice, the Pact website, the monthly Pact magazine and regular e-bulletins. [www.pact.co.uk](http://www.pact.co.uk)

**South West Screen** (SWS) is a funding and support agency for the cultural and economic development of film, television and digital media in South West England. SWS exist to champion, promote and underpin the region's screen sector seeking to influence and inform policy-makers, decision-takers and public opinion about the contribution, value and needs of film, television and digital media in the region. Through SWS, public funds are channelled into a wide range of creative initiatives, management and support services and outreach. [www.swscreen.co.uk](http://www.swscreen.co.uk)

**Skillset** is the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries and works to raise skills levels in every sector of industry within its remit. They are a strategic organisation, researching where the skills gaps and shortages exist, and raising funding from the industry and Government to develop and deliver solutions to address these problems. Skillset informs and influences training provision and qualification development for the competitive benefit of the audio-visual industries. [www.skillset.org](http://www.skillset.org)

#### IV. Business Development and Support Agencies for Small Firms, Social Enterprises and Voluntary Organisations

Agency	Details
ACEVO	Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations is the professional body for the voluntary sector's chief executives. Their mission is to connect, develop and represent the sector's leaders, with a view to increasing the sector's impact and efficiency. <a href="http://www.acevo.org.uk">www.acevo.org.uk</a>
BACEN	BACEN provides business advice and support to the social economy in Bristol. BACEN provides a comprehensive range of business development support to a wide variety of social enterprises. <a href="http://www.businessmatch.org.uk/agencies/BACEN/">www.businessmatch.org.uk/agencies/BACEN/</a>
Business Link	Practical business advice, information and support. <a href="http://www.businesslink.gov.uk">www.businesslink.gov.uk</a>
RISE	RISE aims to support the development of a sustainable social enterprise sector in the South West of England. <a href="http://www.rise-sw.co.uk">www.rise-sw.co.uk</a>
SFEDI	The Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative Limited is a government recognised, standards setting and endorsement body for learning and skills development for small firms and business support. <a href="http://www.sfedi.co.uk">www.sfedi.co.uk</a>
SBS	The Small Business Service is an agency of the <a href="#">Department of Trade and Industry</a> . Their roles are: to help businesses start and develop as their capabilities grow; to ensure that government support services are accessible, relevant and of high quality; and, to support ethnic minority groups, women entrepreneurs and others to contribute to the UK economy. <a href="http://www.sbs.gov.uk">www.sbs.gov.uk</a>
SEC	The Social Enterprise Coalition is the UK's national body for social enterprise. SEC supports and represents the work of its members, to influence national policy and promote best practice. <a href="http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk">www.socialenterprise.org.uk</a>
Voscur	Voscur is the Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) for Bristol. They are an infrastructure organisation and a development agency for the voluntary, community and social economy sector in Bristol. <a href="http://www.voscur.org">www.voscur.org</a>

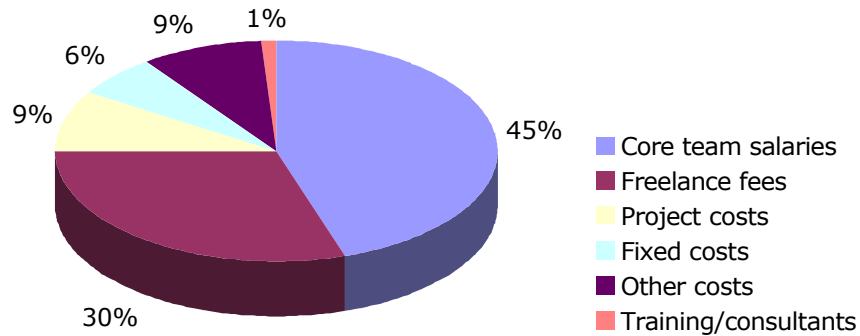
#### V. ACTA – A Case Study

*This case study is compiled from an interview with the director of ACTA, Neil Beddow, with additional information sourced from the ACTA website ([www.acta-bristol.com](http://www.acta-bristol.com)) and the ACTA Annual Review 2004.*

About ACTA
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ACTA is committed to increasing access to the arts, and to individual and community development through participation.</li> <li>➤ ACTA enables people to use their creativity, gain access to education and develop confidence self-esteem and pride of place.</li> <li>➤ ACTA have been delivering quality arts projects in and around Bristol for 21 years.</li> <li>➤ Projects include theatre, carnival, music, video and visual arts, involving hundreds of people every year.</li> </ul>
Financial Situation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ ACTA is a registered charity and Limited by Guarantee. This enables them to get grant funding, but still have the security of a limited company.</li> </ul>



- ACTA's annual income is 400k – 450k. Income is entirely grant funded – there are no admittance fees, no course fees, no sales. Core funding from ACE, Bristol City Council and South Gloucester. Currently projects are funded by SRB6, lottery, Neighbourhood Renewal, private charities, SureStart, Community Fund, Youth Music.
- Below is a breakdown of ACTA's 2004 annual expenditure:



### Employing Freelancers

ACTA has an extensive database of freelancers - there are about 50 on the books at any one time. Once a year they advertise for new people. From this call for freelancers they sift through the CVs. At this stage they are looking for skills and experience in the following:

6. Facilitation
7. Skills in chosen artform - something to offer
8. Commitment to participatory work
9. Sense of fun - ability to improvise, able to cope and make things happen
10. Determination

The short listed applicants are then informally interviewed. The successful candidates join the freelance database and are offered training in child protection and are CRB checked. As and when work comes up suitable candidates from the database are selected and contacted.

There is a fixed daily rate for freelancers of £150 per day.

### Long-term Strategy

- A key part of the organisation's success is attributed to having a simple, unrestrictive basic aim: Arts involvement is good for you.
- The organisation's income is expected to decrease in future years due to the following major changes in the funding landscape:
  1. Funding from the Lottery is expected to become harder as money is diverted to the 2012 Olympic games in London.
  2. Local Authority grant funding is being phased out to be replaced by service agreements, as yet it is unclear how this will affect the community and voluntary sector.
- ACTA belongs to the following professional bodies: National Association of Youth Theatres, VOSCUR, South West Participation Arts Network.