Working Better Together

HOW WE WOULD LIKE IT TO BE

This is a non-exhaustive list of important points to consider in the early stages of partnership working with creative community hubs. Think of these as basic guiding principles to inform the planning and implementation of your partnership working.

This poster forms part of *Working Better Together,* a report on partnership working between creative community hubs and cultural institutions in Edinburgh, published in May 2022. *How We Would Like It To Be* came out of interviews with hub representatives across the city, that explored experiences of best practice partnerships, poor partnership working and, cruicially, how they would like it to be. The quotes used are from those conversations.

RESPECT

Respect creative community hubs for the work they do and the way they work by involving them in partnership planning right from the start

Good partnership working comes when organisations take the time to understand the work of community hubs and approach them as equal partners from the very beginning of a working relationship, and before submitting funding applications with named partners. It's important to respect differences in organisations and the different ways they work – for example, hubs viewing their community members as participants as opposed to audiences – as this will help strengthen the partnership.

"There are some organisations…[who] totally get it…because they've been having these conversations with us.""

TRUST

Take time to build relationships and trust with community hubs and their community members

It's key to embark on partnerships with community hubs and their participants with due diligence and care from the offset. This involves building relationships over time and being open and transparent about each other's objectives when it comes to working together, which will help to inform the partnership going forward.

"If you want to work with us, then invest in us. And we'll work together. Don't come with your beneficent barrow of things."

INTEGRATE

Create integrated programming opportunities to programme, curate and commission directly with communities and their hubs

Rather than simply bringing in cultural activity externally to a local area, community hubs often have greater interest in (co-)producing cultural activity locally. Taking the opportunity to work closer with creative community hubs in order to programme their own material will also have greater resonance with participants – so too will platforming the work of community hubs in partnership programming where both organisations are visibly promoting their work together.

"Just give me a space in your programme? Use your, you know, huge reach, city wide reach, to profile what's going on in the city? That's it."

INVEST

Increase current levels of funding for creative community hubs

Community hubs each have differing levels of financial stability dependent on external funding agreements, yet all experience a significant level of precarity when carrying out their activity in comparison with their better funded counterparts. It is important to financially support hubs during the course of any partnership working, including apportioning a section of the project budget towards the use of community hub space and staff time, as well as paying directly for services offered by hubs such as printing or catering.

"If you want the margins to engage, then invest in the margins. It's quite straightforward."

REMEMBER

There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to partnering with community hubs

Do not adopt the same approach when working with different community hubs, as the communities and the places in which they are based may be vastly diverse. Just because one way of partnership working was deemed successful in one place, it's important not to assume that the same approach will be similarly successful in another. It is also important to remember that communities are not one homogenous entity but contain a myriad of different people from different backgrounds within a similar locality, which may be the only commonality between them.

"We have to create community."