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**NCACE Arts Professional Survey: Insights into values of collaboration**

**(Presentation length 4 mins)**

Thank you for the invitation to be here today. Last March NCACE undertook a substantial survey with the Arts and Cultural Sector, in partnership with Arts Professional, a major communications platform for the sector.

The survey, entitled Collaborating with Higher Education, yielded over 500 responses from individuals right across the arts and culture sectors and in all regions. It comprised both quantitative and qualitative questions thus providing a very rich dataset which we have discussed in our two key reports:

[Collaborating with HIgher Education Institutions](https://ncace.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Wilson-Hopkins-Rossi-Collaborating-with-Higher-Education-Institutions-1.pdf) and

[Place in Collaborations between HEIs and the Arts and Culture Sector.](https://ncace.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Rossi-Hopkins-The-Role-of-%E2%80%98Place-in-Collaborations-Between-HEIs-and-the-Arts-and-Cultural-Sector-1.pdf)

We used the term ‘collaboration’ rather than ‘knowledge exchange’ as it tends to be a term that’s still not that well recognised beyond Higher Education.

What I want to focus here this afternoon - given our focus on capturing and understanding the value of KE activities - is some brief aspects of **what we learned from the survey about how the arts and culture sector value collaborations.**

So, briefly, I will hone into two key areas from the survey that give us key insight into how the arts and culture sector value collaborative activities.

The first area focuses on the answers to our questions on **what aspects of collaborations worked well, and indeed not so well.** These responses help us to understand how respondents felt about the collabs and we can also think of these as affective responses to the collaboration)

The second set of responses relate to how arts and culture sector organisations talk about the ways in which **collaborations connect or relate to their core missions** (and therefore also of course, arguably, the core values of their organisations).

These are by no means the only points of learning from the survey in relation to the topic under discussion here today and the reports listed above will be useful for deeper background reading and context.

**First Area: Aspects of the collaboration which worked well and not so well.**

The survey answers led us to identify seven broad categories as follows:

* Project Management
* Capacity Building and Skills Development
* Student involvement/experience
* Social Impact
* Financial Impact
* Spaces, places and physical infrastructure
* Creative leadership, kudos and profile building

The following table gives a range of the kinds of areas that were frequently reported under each theme with regard to the question of what worked well in collaborations. There is a similar table in the Key Findings report above on what worked less well in the collaborations.

**Table 3: What worked well in the collaborations**

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| Project Management | * Overall reports of very positive experiences * Mutual aims and benefits well reported * Good and equal co-management of projects reported * Better understanding of the human resources implications for collaborations reported * Good administrative procedures reported (e.g. Terms of Reference, MoUs, risk analyses, conflict of interest) * Development of strong relationships with HEI professionals/students/communities reported |
| Capacity building and skills development | * Data findings/analysis leading to organisational development and business plans * Exposure to research and development processes * Increased support for practitioners/organisations through volunteering/student placements * Opportunities for live feedback from new audiences * Opportunities to learn academic and non-academic languages * Opportunities to research/learn more about specific themes * Strong cross-institutional dialogue between partners * Training and leadership development for practitioners/organisations provided by HEIs * Valuable experience of jointly delivering projects/exhibitions/performances * Widened understanding of and access to new/different funding streams (e.g. AHRC) |
| Student involvement/experience | * Practitioners/cultural organisations providing positive education/scholarship/work experience for students * Some HEIs later borrowed methods of explanation and education from the arts/cultural sector |
| Social impact | * Improved/increased networking opportunities on multiple scales (e.g. local regional, national and international) * Extended networks valuable for promoting project outputs * Increased connectivity with the local communities * Performance opportunities helping to build audiences (academic and non-academic) * Collaborations providing a platform and spotlight for specific specialised issues * Input from organisations helped to diversify academic audiences and teams |
| Financial impact | * Collaborations leading to additional funding * Collaborations creating less financial risks for some cultural organisations * Ability to draw upon internal HEI funding expertise * Some reports of ample travel costs and expenses provided |
| Spaces, places and physical infrastructure | * Access to high quality facilities and infrastructure * Access to research/library/archive resources * Some collaborations lead to the creation of new spaces/resources which local authorities do not have the capacity to support (e.g. archive storage) |
| Creative Leadership, kudos and profile building | * Academics invited to join advisory boards, bringing new expertise to organisations and individuals * Broader audiences reached via HEI communications channels, sometimes international * Creative consultation as part of the evaluation * Positive reputational/profile impact * Good marketing opportunities for all partners |

(The areas marked in blue are the ones I read out during the seminar as time didn’t permit the whole list to be read.)

**Second Area: Value as narrated in response to organisational mission**

Of the 163 respondents over three quarters of respondents (75.46%) told us that research collaborations were either the most important (9.2%) or ‘a priority but not the most important’ aspect of their work (66.26%). The overall picture suggests a very significant level of interest in research collaborations with Higher Education.

To expand further on this question, we provided an optional open-ended question for respondents to provide additional information about **how research collaborations fitted with their organisational mission**.

So again, we’re getting into the heart of these organisations core values in this question.

Around 15 recurring themes emerging from these narratives as follows:

* As a way to share, widen and better understand audiences at a local, regional and international scale;
* To enable working on major projects with national significance
* For practical support and skills building (e.g. for artists)
* For the opportunity to share physical spaces and infrastructure;
* To access and engage with more research and expertise on artistic

practice/interests

* To better understand history/experiences/subject/theories of

creative practice;

* To develop research frameworks and improve evaluation practice;
* To establish shared strategic objectives;
* To obtain robust evidence for business planning;
* To put into place a cooperative model of collaboration built on

similar values;

* To strengthen specific arts/cultural subsectors in particular regions.
* To help map pathways through collections
* To help with creation of new content and narratives
* To keep practices up to date and encourage peer networking
* To provide evidence to support future work

(The areas highlighted in blue are the ones I read out in the seminar. Again, there wasn’t time to read the whole list.)

**Concluding comments**

What is really interesting to detect through the survey narratives, is that it is social and wider values about places, networks, cultural content, and so on, that are expressed as being important rather than financial or commercial values. Whilst I’m not suggesting that financial arrangements in KE are not important - in fact they really are - what is telling here is that what is driving the collaboration is invariably non-financial motivations.

But a final note which may be useful for some of you here today. Also, indicated elsewhere in the survey, the arts and culture sector expressed the need to have a better understanding of the university landscape and how it operates to support best practice in working together. Matchmaking services, knowledge about funding opportunities, access to funding, and practical sessions about the R&D landscape, and getting involved in it were all cited.

Evelyn Wilson

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