

Museum-University Partnerships

Do we need a partner?



National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
Public Engagement

Do we need a partner?

The MUPI project has evidenced that there is significant value in universities and museums working together. Given the challenging funding landscapes for both sectors, it is important that partnerships deliver value for both organisations.

It helps if organisations consider what they are looking for from each other, and what the desired outcomes could be. It can also be helpful to consider the nature of your work together, and think hard about the type of partnership that will work best for you. For example, are you looking for:

- **Long term partnership:** Do you and your partners have shared goals? Can working together add value to each of the partner's work? Are you able to create a mutually beneficial approach? The focus here is on organisations coming together to work on agreed areas of activity, and an expectation that the partnership will continue long term. Long term partnerships may seek funding to cover specific project activities, or invest time and resource in mutually beneficial endeavours.
- **Collaboration:** Do you and your partners agree to share the responsibility for delivering on a specific activity, goal or project? Do you each have an equal stake in your shared work? Will each organisation commit resource and/or money to deliver the activity? Is decision making shared across the partnerships? Partnerships that seek to collaborate tend to invest resource in working together, and may well seek funding to scale up their activity.
- **Short term:** Is your work together framed around a specific need one organisation has, that the other partners can address. Does one or more of the organisations require a specific service (e.g. access to an artefact, facility or academic expertise) from the other partners for the delivery of their individual goal? Is working together driven by one lead organisation responsible for how funding is allocated and spent? Short term partnerships are really important. Partners recognise that the relationship will not last forever.

Questions to consider

- Do both organisations understand and agree what form of relationship they are hoping to create?
- Do both organisations understand the terminology being used, and the implications of the work they are committing to together?
- Do both organisations agree how the success of partnership will be assessed or evidenced? It is worth remembering, that a partnership may be considered successful even when it doesn't deliver against the original outcomes, and it worth planning what will happen in this case.

Actions to take

- Use our jargon buster to explore common terms and how they might be understood differently across different sectors. Make sure you check understandings, ensuring that both organisations are discussing the same thing.
- Have clear and honest discussions from the outset of the relationship. If you cannot commit to a long term partnership, or can only work together if you get funding to support the work – make sure you are clear about this from the beginning.
- Don't be afraid to agree not to work together – it is better to walk away at the start, than to enter a partnership you cannot deliver.
- Ensure that there are regular meetings where the organisations can review progress of the strands of activity.
- Communicate, communicate, communicate – the better you are at keeping communication going, the more likely your partnership will run well.

Resource created by NCCPE and Jo Stark, University of Portsmouth.



**National
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The National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) is internationally recognised for its work supporting and inspiring universities to engage with the public. We work to change perspectives, promote innovation, and nurture and celebrate excellence. We also champion meaningful engagement that makes a real and valued difference to people's lives.

The NCCPE is supported by the UK Higher Education Councils, Research Councils UK and Wellcome, and has been hosted by the University of Bristol and the University of the West of England since it was established in 2008.

National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement

Tel 0117 328 7190

Email nccpe.enquiries@uwe.ac.uk

Twitter @NCCPE

www.publicengagement.ac.uk

The Museum-University Partnership Initiative (MUPI) was supported by public funding from Arts Council England. It sought to enable museums and universities to meet together and develop mutually beneficial partnerships. A range of resources have been created, drawing on the learning from the MUPI project. You can find all these resources on the NCCPE website.



Supported using public funding by
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