SHARED DECISION-MAKING

Tips, tools and case studies from Creative People and Places projects

by Louise White for MB Associates

Shared decision-making

Collaborating with local people to shape relevant and inspiring arts programmes

By Louise White for MB Associates

There are many different forms and levels of engagement across Creative People and Places (CPP): a programme that has at its heart the desire for local people to be active collaborators in the choosing and creating of arts experiences. What CPP Places are learning about sharing decisions – and power – with their participants is increasingly relevant in participatory arts practices more broadly.

Shared decision-making involves shifting the balance of power from arts practitioners and organisations to include a spectrum of local voices: for example community members, local businesses and community organisations. It creates a space where different perspectives are valued. CPP Places have found that this results in a more meaningful, locally relevant programme that increases people's engagement in the arts. Those who share in the decisions become invested in the art and spread the word, and local people see a stronger fit with their locality. They share pride and ownership of something that is 'of' and 'with' the community rather than just 'for' the community.

Commissioned by the CPP National Evaluation, this resource offers a collection of project examples, tips and tools that show some of the ways that CPP Places are creating opportunities for people to steer and participate in project-level decisions. The tools have been created by CPP teams or informed by interviews with team members.

Woven throughout are questions and quotes drawn from Chrissie Tiller's thought-provoking think piece **Power Up**. Commissioned at the same time as this practical resource, *Power Up* unearths and explores some of the complexities and challenges of sharing power, drawing on experiences across the CPP programmes.

This resource is for you if...

You are:
▶ an arts practitioner
▶ a creative producer
▶ an organisation of any size
...with a mission to engage local people in arts, culture and creativity.

You want:
▶ to develop locally-resonant, creative programming by involving your local community in sharing decisions to shape it.

Cover image: Creative Barking and Dagenham. Audience at DAGfest 2015, curated by a steering group of local residents. Photo credit: Dabuju Media

About this toolkit

This resource gives examples of shared decision-making from across the CPP programme. It includes case studies, tools and tips to help you think strategically, recruit, deliver collaboratively and reflect together.

Think strategically

Think about whether shared decision-making is right for you, and how to begin

Recruit

Set up a group or panel to make shared decisions, and consider how to include wider audiences

Deliver collaboratively

Think about when and how you might make shared decisions during delivery of projects

Reflect together

Plan and review your projects collaboratively

> " None of us is an expert – but we all have a bit of expertise."

Arts for Wellbeing Manager, bait

What steps do we take to make a shared decision?

Use the tools, tips and examples in this resource to help you:

1. Consider if this is right for you

▶ Does it suit the aims of your projects?
▶ Do you have the capacity to do this?

2. Recruit people

Identify and recruit local people who are interested in helping shape your programming, valuing their expertise and knowledge of the local area.
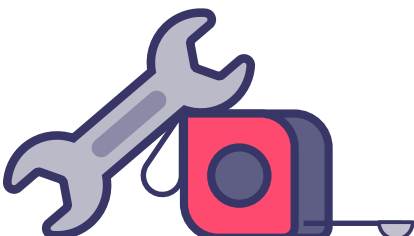
3. Create a space for everyone to:

▶ **Share** their own expertise and experience
▶ **Learn** from others in the room, and external experiences or information
▶ **Explore** the information you have from different angles, asking questions, making connections, sparking ideas

4. Make the decision

Many people say that this point is 'organic'. Sometimes there is a clear process – a vote, for example – and at other times there is a consensus or a number of clear themes that come from a discussion.

In this resource

Look for these icons in each section to find:

CASE STUDIES

TIPS

TOOLS

POWER UP

The examples in this resource have come from a literature review and interviews with Places from across the CPP network
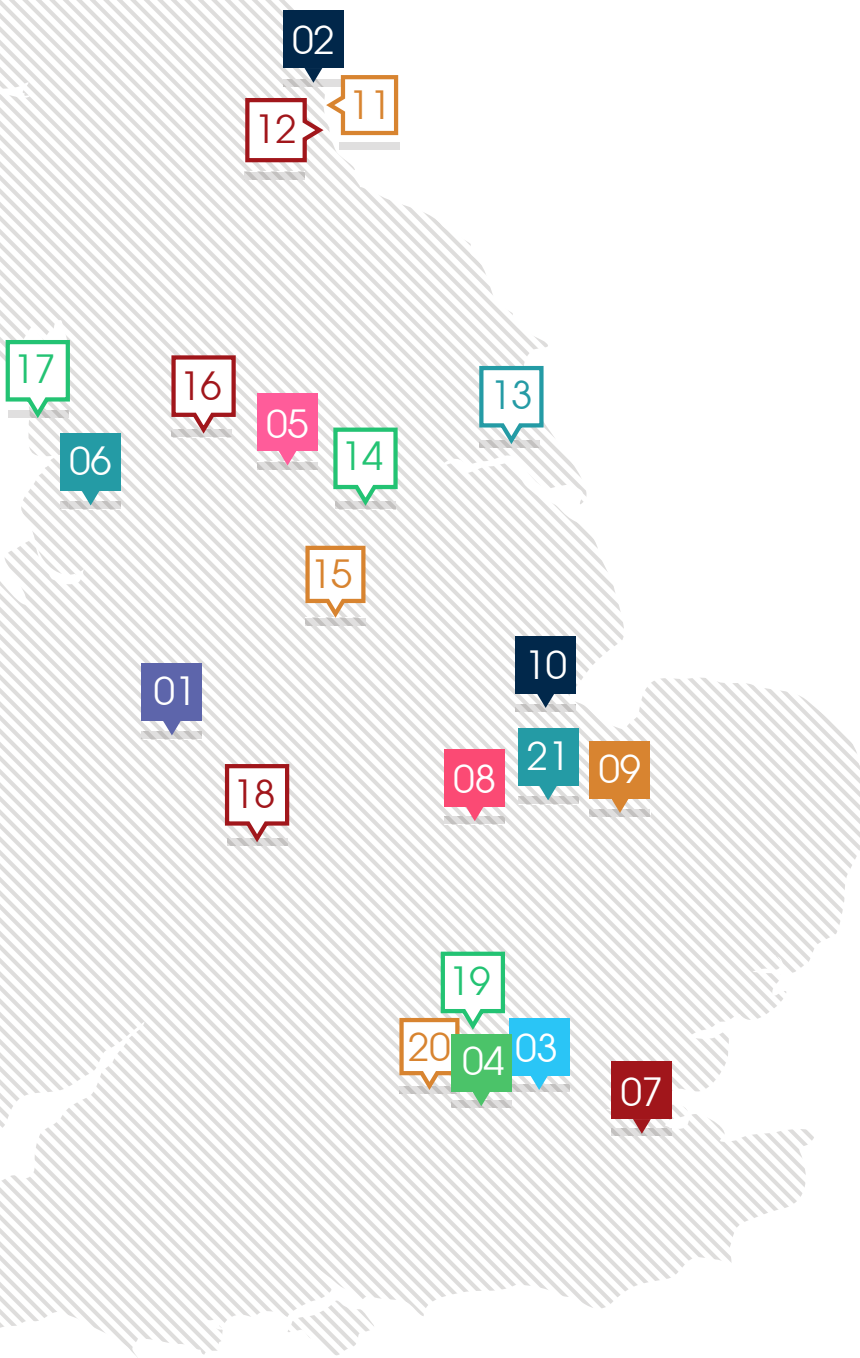
01 **Appetite***,
Stoke-on-Trent

02 **bait***,
South East Northumberland

03 **Creative Barking and Dagenham***

04 **Creative People and Places***, Hounslow

05 **Creative Scene***, West Yorkshire

06 **Heart of Glass***, St Helens

07 **Ideas Test***, Swale and Medway

08 **Made in Corby***

09 **Market Place***, Fenland and Forest Heath

10 **Transported***, Boston and South Holland

11 **The Cultural Spring**, Sunderland & South Tyneside

12 **East Durham Creates**, East Durham

13 **Creative People & Places**, Hull

14 **Right Up Our Street**, Doncaster

15 **First Art**, Ashfield, Bolsover, Mansfield and North East Derbyshire

16 **Super Slow Way**, Pennine Lancashire

17 **LeftCoast**, Blackpool & Wyre

18 **Creative Black Country**, Black Country

19 **Revolution**, Luton

20 **Home**, Slough

21 **Peterborough Presents**, Peterborough

*Places that contributed to this toolkit

01

STRATEGIC THINKING:

Questions to ask if you are considering greater collaboration with your community

Questions to ask if you are considering greater collaboration with your community

Sharing the power of decisions within your programme may seem like an effective, relevant and inclusive way of working with the people you are motivated to create art with and for. But it may not be as easy as it sounds. There are numerous challenges and you may face real barriers with this kind of participation.

Collaborating requires trust and demands reciprocity. The CPP Places are still navigating their way; indeed, there are no fixed answers.

In this section we present a number of strategic-level questions for you to consider before you begin to explore shared decision-making in practice.

▶ In thinking about your broader arts programme, consider the different ways people currently engage in each of your projects. What value do you place on these different types of engagement?

▶ What is the potential for participants to influence parts of your programme?

▶ How and when might you let go of the power to make decisions? And to what degree?

▶ What change do you seek to make with your participants? Do they seek this change too?

▶ Why might people want to work closely with you? What is in it for them?

▶ Who do you wish to involve and why do you value their involvement? How will you show them their perspectives are valued? What stake do they have – how will you manage dominant interests?

▶ Have you taken into account the amount of time needed to develop these relationships?

▶ What would success look like for your projects? For your broader programme?

▶ Why do you want to work in this way? What personal values and/or strategic priorities might underpin this work for you?

▶ What degree of choice will you share? How will you make sure you are honest and upfront with everyone involved (members of the public, participants, artists, and partners) about where the ultimate decision-making will sit?

▶ What are the risks and how will you manage these?

▶ How will you know if/when this is not right approach for you?
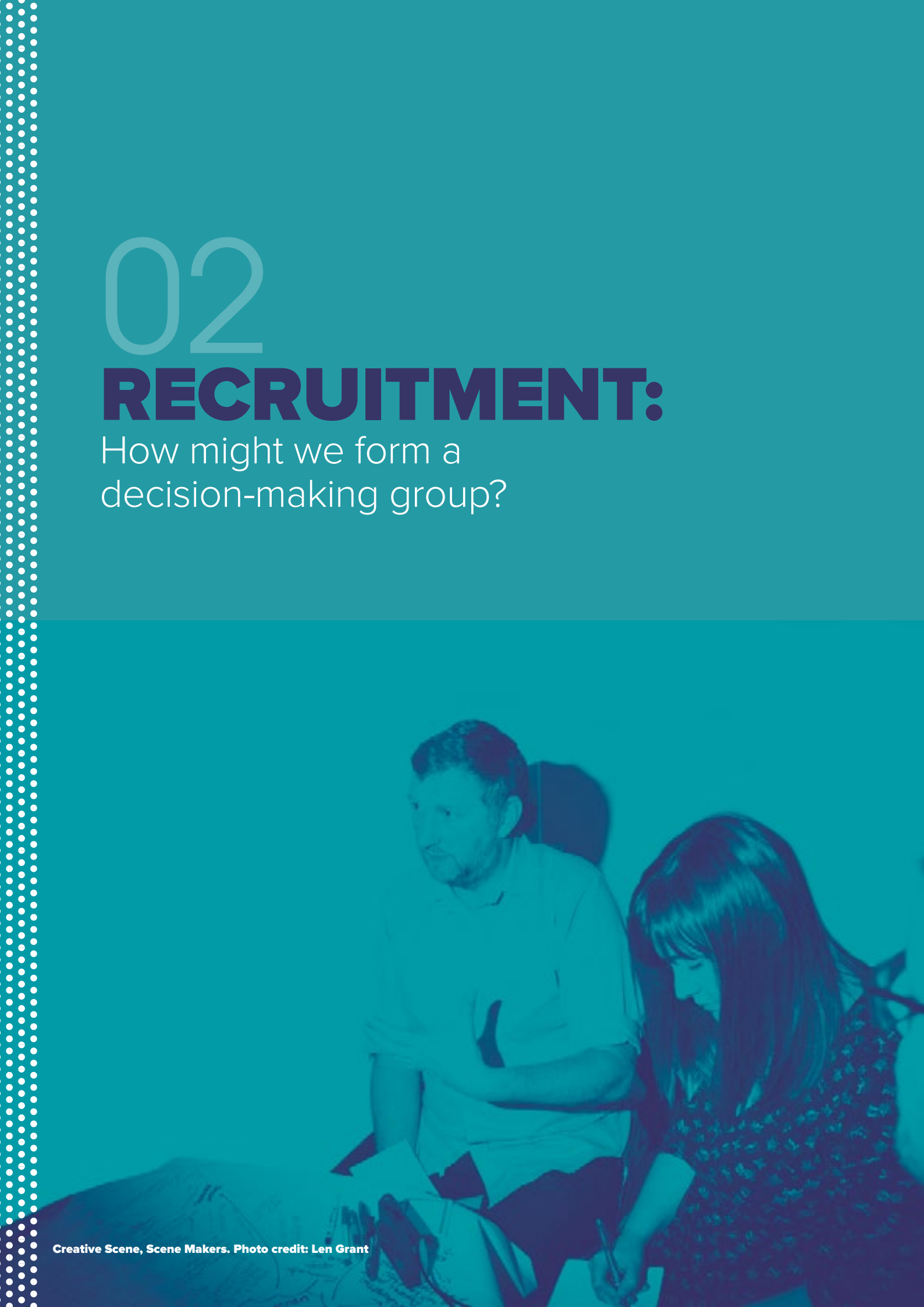
▶ What is the first step you are going to take?

Power up!

Extracts from Power Up by Chrissie Tiller, with contributions from CPP team members

TIPS

POWER UP

Think about:

Power

❝ CPP directors spoke of having to reassure community members their opinions were equally valued. One described, *'a participant (who was also the chair of a local community association) asking, 'are we doing okay?'* after they had contributed their thoughts on a selection of artists. Another director was honest enough to suggest it can be, *'an uphill struggle'* to bring participants to a place where they begin to see themselves on, *'an equal footing.''*

Reciprocity

❝ Teams suggested developing the kinds of relationships that create the *'trust'* needed to work in this way can only be based on, *'mutual respect for different people's expertise.'* ... it is about creating, *'a mutual understanding that this is part of a shared process.'* It means being *'transparent'* about possibilities, including the role of the artist/s within any project: even if that means acknowledging, *'it can't always be an absolutely equal exchange.''*

Ethics

❝ *There is a tension between wanting to connect with communities and not always having the time for the conversations that will enable us to understand who they are."*

Collaboration

❝ *Change and impact is about people and collaborations and... the best way to do that is to build strong and positive connections. And then use those to support the communities we hope to engage with."*

**Appetite's supper club.
Photo credit: Appetite**

❝ *The real power often comes in a monetary form. 'We' still sign off the invoices and 'we' are still the ones legally accountable, and our panels realise that. In one panel, our partner organisation contributed financially to the final event. The balance of power was suddenly different."*

Values

❝ *...what might be gained by sharing our own values and stories with our participants as part of the power sharing process [?] Especially when we were constantly asking them to engage with projects where they might be expected to share theirs."*

NB Quotes in italics are from CPP Places

02
RECRUITMENT:
How might we form a decision-making group?

2.1 Identifying who to work with

A chance to know your local area better

Members of Escape Family Support at The Edinburgh Fringe 2016. bait. Photo credit: Alex Brenner

Identifying who you might engage from your community can include the following stages:

- ▶ using resources like demographic data to help you identify or 'map' who is out there
- ▶ recruiting representatives of the community to form decision-making panels and/or creating individual opportunities for people to help shape an offer
- ▶ drawing on this group's expertise to map the community once again to make sure no voice is missing, which can help target the programme

Where to start: approaches to identifying who should be in the room

CASE STUDIES

▶ **Heart of Glass** began with research on local demographics, exploring who lives in the local area and who does not engage with the arts/creative pursuits. They identified older people, young people and people with disabilities as key new audiences to target.

▶ **Ideas Test** began by exploring who was active in the local community, seeking suggestions and nominations. Having gathered an initial group together they asked them to consider the make-up of the local community, and identify who else should be at the table.

▶ **Transported** started with a public invitation to take part, and built a group around the person or people who responded (project: On your Doorstep). For another project they approached local community partners including ESOL groups (English for Speakers of Other Languages), Neighbourhood action groups and local schools, had a stall at the local market, and linked in to existing celebrations and events in the area (project: From Stump to Sluice).

▶ These approaches begin with those who are more engaged in the local community already, and then work to reach those who are less engaged through projects and programmes. **Market Place** and **Creative Scene** both worked with their decision-making community panels to identify further audiences they might target, using activities such as community mapping and local data from Audience Spectrum to create shared visual prompts for discussion. This brings the process full circle by asking participants to repeat the mapping exercise that was initially done by the project team (like Heart of Glass).

Power Up! Think about...

Privilege: Are we in the arts always coming from a place of privilege?

❝ **Never assume. We can have presumptions about the communities we work with that often miss important realities.**❞

Tips for identifying who to work with

TIPS

Identify community champions and your broader local audience to ensure your panel is representative

What local demographic data do you have?

To find yours, use:

The **Audience Spectrum** tool

Local census data from **NOMIS**, **ONS** or your Local Authority

▶ What experience do you need in the room?
▶ Is your decision-making panel representative of your area in terms of diversity and geographic spread?
▶ Are there other considerations for who should be there?

" You're always going to start with people who are engaged as you need a starting point – as long as you're conscious of that and helping them to reach beyond into un-engaged audiences – it's about being aware of your context."

Creative Producer, Creative Scene

Power Up! Think about...

Ethics or Aesthetics: Where do our responsibilities lie in making art with others?

" **It is easy to forget everyone is an individual as well as part of a community: their own life experiences informing how they can participate or engage."**

Community mapping exercise

You can use this tool with your existing panel to learn more about the local area and to inform programming and further recruitment
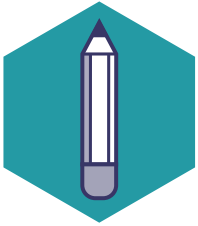
TOOLS

This approach combines local experience with Audience Spectrum data. This means it is a balanced decision, based on local and arts sector expertise. It is essentially a group mind-mapping exercise, which you can use to make decisions in other areas.

Who is in the room?

Small group of local people, preferably those who have different daily routines. (May include local partners, businesses and the general public). Facilitator with knowledge of the local area. A note-taker might be useful to capture the conversations people are having during this exercise.

The note-taker could focus on:

▶ Where are the commonalities?
▶ Where are the hidden frustrations?
▶ Any sparks of project ideas

What you will need

Large paper, coloured pens, post it notes, play dough or any other creative materials that the group might like to work with.

A camera to take pictures of the final map.

Data from Audience Spectrum on arts participation in your area key audiences and types of engagement.

Community mapping exercise
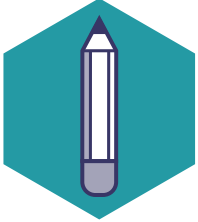
TOOLS

1. Setting up

Place

As a group create a map of the town according to you. It doesn't need to be geographically accurate. It should include the places that are important to you, places where people meet, etc. Here are a few starting points to get you going:

- ▶ Draw everyone's individual daily journey through the town. Where do you go? What do you pass? Where is busy? Where is important to you?
- ▶ If you had visitors to the town, where would you take them?
- ▶ What are the spaces that people talk about a lot? This could be because they like/hate them or because something is changing.
- ▶ How is the town different between day and night? Week and weekend?
- ▶ Step back and have a look at the map together. Fill in anything you think is still missing.

People

Now think about what sort of people might attend each place.

- ▶ What might they be interested in? (Priorities, Work, Family, Hobbies, Etc.)

Compare the data from Audience Spectrum with your map:

- ▶ Which audiences are already on the map?
- ▶ Are there any new audiences we might add?

2. Focusing in

Use post-it notes to record ideas throughout these activities. You might have a piece of flip-chart paper for each question.

Discuss as a group:

- ▶ What do the group have in common with the local audience – for example interests and experience?
- ▶ Are there any opportunities you can see which are being missed at the moment?
- ▶ Is there anyone who has particular links to an audience?

Think about one audience at a time:

- ▶ What might a typical day look like for them?
- ▶ What opportunities might there be for them to engage with art during their day?
- ▶ What might stop them from accessing arts activities?
- ▶ Can you think how we might help them overcome these barriers?

Ask the note-taker to feed back on their observations – does this confirm the group's thinking, or highlight other themes? Add any new ideas on post-its.
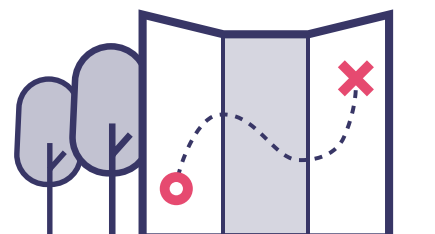
Community mapping exercise
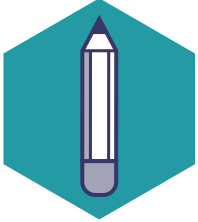
TOOLS

3. Making the decision

Look back at the post its and group them by theme: including audiences and any other ideas that have come up for how you might work with them (facilitator leads with the group suggesting where each should go).

Discuss each project idea in turn. You might:

- ▶ have consensus on a clear front-runner
- ▶ have a vote between two or three leading ideas
- ▶ discuss a way to combine the strongest ideas, or do more than one (be mindful of capacity and manage expectations!)

4. Agree next steps to take the work forward

Make sure you take photos of the finished map. Make sure it is clear enough that you can refer back to it at a later date.
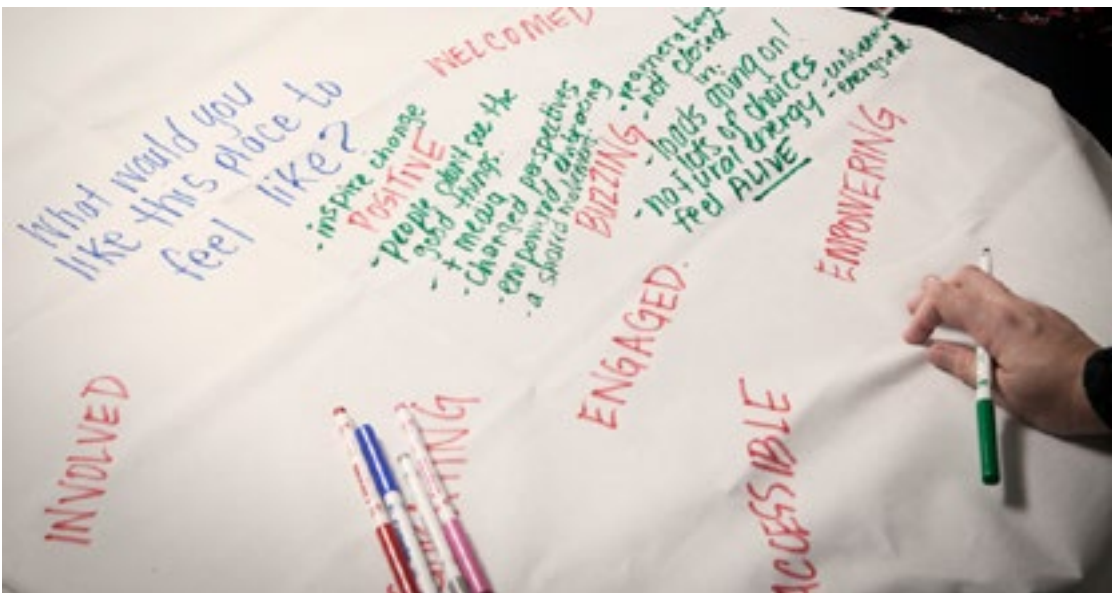
Creative Scene. Scene Makers. Photo credit: Len Grant
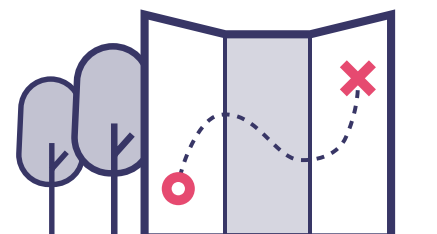
2.2 Recruiting your decision-making panel

Recruitment usually begins with who you know. Conversations are key; going for cups of tea, getting out locally in person to talk about what you're doing and ask who might be active in the community. You might ask for volunteers or nominations.

Be clear what you are asking for and always think through what is in it for those who take part.

Creative Barking and Dagenham. Cultural Connectors at DAGfest 2015. Photo credit: Dabuju Media

Approaches to recruitment

CASE STUDIES

▶ **Creative People and Places Hounslow** recruited four active Local Advisory Groups across the borough through a combination of recruitment and self-nomination. They identified potential members by chatting to people within the community, sharing information about the project and following up suggestions of people with passion and/or local standing. As the groups developed they began to find their own members, which Hounslow describe as "the best scenario". The groups are familiar with the diversity of the borough through first-hand experience, and are good at identifying whose voices are missing from the room in order to target new members.

▶ **Ideas Test** recruited a network of Community Catalysts: a mix of local people including professional and amateur artists, volunteers from local groups and organisations, and other people disassociated with the arts but active in the community. They recruited a local audience development officer with understanding of local communities to begin the process. They asked for nominations, hoping to get 50, and received 85. They now have a network of over 100 who have been involved in all aspects of the programme, from design to decision-making. Their nomination form is made available on their website (also see p19).

▶ **Creative Barking and Dagenham** are aware of the need for diversity on their panel in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, to reflect the balance of Barking/Dagenham. They manage this in quite a soft way and normally find that it works out, as the panels are drawn from their Cultural Connectors network (a network of over 150 local ambassadors making programming decisions) which is representative of the borough's diversity. Bringing in one new member on each panel each time ensures they continuously change and involve new people.

▶ **Creative Scene** initially began their CPP programme without an office so worked wherever there was Wi-Fi locally, including cafes and pubs. They reflect that this was the perfect start as they overheard lots of conversations and were well-placed to join in. They now make sure that once a week someone is out locally to keep this going.

Power Up! Think about...

Reciprocity: Do we have reciprocal partnerships with our communities?

" **It's about finding the connections, finding the shared issue, and listening."**

Tips for recruiting your decision-making panel

TIPS

Consider how you will spread the word about your invitation to take part. It's best to do it face to face:

▶ Who are your local partners?

▶ What community groups do you know?

▶ Which community venues might you visit?

▶ Who can you go and have a cup of tea with?

▶ What is your ask? What are you offering in return?

Think about how many people you want to engage in a decision-making group:

▶ Larger groups can provide a broad range of ideas which form the starting point as options for 'content' to be decided.

▶ Smaller groups are better placed to reach a consensus through discussion.

66 It's better to work with a small group – say 12 with a nucleus of 3 or 4 – as a high level of support is required. But ownership will really be built this way and it will filter through to those who engage with the art."

Creative Producer, Creative Scene

66 We're careful not to curate and hand pick people, as it's a fundamental part of the programme that all opportunities are offered out across the network rather than it feeling like only certain people get invited."

CPP Place Director, Creative Barking and Dagenham

Power Up! Think about...

Participation: Is increased participation about climbing a ladder or encouraging people to find their way along a continuum?

66 **...every person is different...For some it might mean getting more deeply involved in one art form or practice, leading, volunteering or decision-making, for others it might mean trying lots of different types of art experiences at a superficial level. And..., if the family that go to the theatre as an annual treat truly don't want to engage with any other arts activities then that has to be fine too."**
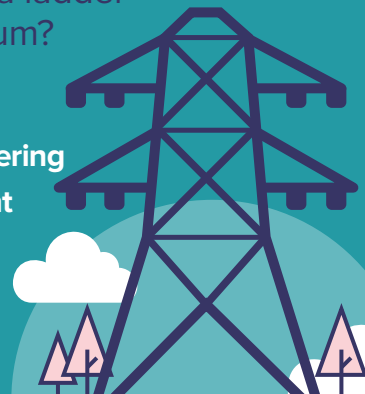
Template: Community panel member nomination form

TOOLS

Ideas Test developed this tool for people to nominate a friend or community member for a local decision making panel

[INTRODUCTORY TEXT ABOUT THE ROLE]
Begin with text about your programme, who you are looking for, the experience, interests and kind of things they might be doing.

FULL NAME OF PERSON YOU WOULD LIKE TO NOMINATE:

WHAT MAKES THEM A [ROLE TITLE HERE] (NO MORE THAN 40 WORDS)?
Think about what title you might give the role. Examples across CPP include ambassador, connector and catalyst. This question asks about them (e.g. they run a local youth group), rather than your reasons, which can be less helpful (they are my friend).

YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS:

YOUR FULL NAME:

YOUR PHONE NUMBER:

NOMINATED PERSON'S EMAIL ADDRESS:

NOMINATED PERSON'S PHONE NUMBER:

HAS THE NOMINATED PERSON GIVEN PERMISSION FOR IDEAS TEST TO CONTACT THEM?
Only have the 'yes' option here – this makes it clear that they must have permission from the person before they nominate them.

Yes, they are happy to be contacted

Note: if you use an online form, make all fields compulsory.

Tool credit: developed by Ideas Test

2.3 How to retain, support and manage your panel

It can be a challenge to establish a core group, as people drop in and out and will not all be at the same level of understanding or engagement. It is important to recognise that this fluctuation is part of the nature of working with voluntary panel members with busy lives. Support, communication and clear benefits of being involved are key to instilling ownership, confidence and motivation, as well as using a variety of different communication channels to suit different needs.

It is essential to establish a welcoming safe space and to build mutual trust and respect.

**Creative Scene. Scene Makers.
Photo credit: Len Grant**

Approaches to retaining, supporting and managing your panel

CASE STUDIES

▶ **Ideas Test** and **Creative Barking and Dagenham** have a rolling panel model. **Ideas Test** draw from their large pool of Community Catalysts and previous recipients of their community funding to form panels who decide on new projects to fund. Members meet quarterly and commit to 2-4 meetings, with new members introduced on a rolling basis. **Creative Barking and Dagenham** have more than 50 panels of Cultural Connectors who take the role of a commissioner, working to a brief to read applications and support artists who applied to commissions. There are a minimum of three to a panel, and commitment is half a day to three days total with a new panel member each time they meet. This model keeps a fresh perspective and supports new people to develop the skills of taking part.

▶ **Creative People and Places Hounslow** run training for their Local Advisory Groups where there is an identified need, such as facilitation skills and writing funding bids. They support their members to develop confidence and experience by running trips to increase exposure and access to the arts, and bring prospective new arts partners to present to the group. Where members are less engaged they spend time outside of the group with them to support them to get up to speed. They use clear and varied communication channels to respond to what works for different people (phone, email, social media), and invest the time to ensure the message gets across to as many as possible.

They establish an equal space with everyone on the same level by considering how it is set up and facilitated. They begin and end with a reflection activity to get people talking and sharing together, which also helps people warm up and re-familiarise, as they meet monthly.

Members are given a volunteer agreement at the beginning to clearly set out why they are there and how they will benefit in return. At the start of their project-planning process they find out what panel members are interested in so they can facilitate their engagement on different levels: for example, some may prefer to hand out flyers in advance rather than attend the event. **Creative People and Places Hounslow** maintains that if people don't attend for a while they are not necessarily disengaged – they often still reply to email communication to participate in group decisions and may re-join in the future.

Power Up! Think about...

Participation: What are the social, political and economic factors that our art is situated within, and how does this affect participation?

❝ **'In order to participate,' one director suggested, 'an individual or a group needs to find what is relevant to them — the more it finds relevance on their terms the more involved people will be.' ❞**
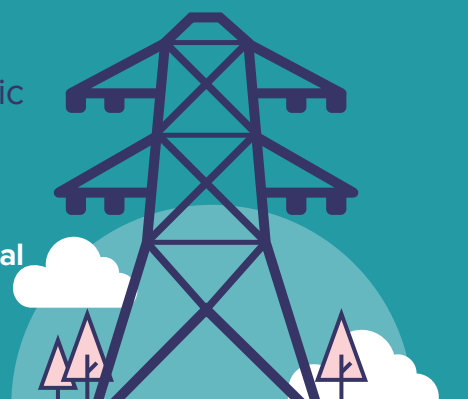
Tips for retaining, supporting and managing your panel

TIPS

Think about what works for your group:

▶ What is it that motivates them to be involved?

▶ What is a realistic level of commitment: frequency and length of time? Is it linked to the lifespan of a specific project?

▶ If you choose a rolling panel, how will you support new members to integrate and get up to speed?

▶ What might your ground rules be? Consider drawing up a volunteer agreement.

"If you go straight into the agenda people switch off, so taking this time to settle in is essential."

Community Arts Worker, CPP Hounslow

"It is important to recognise people are giving up their time, so it needs to be fun but challenging."

Community Arts Worker, CPP Hounslow

"Availability of five people at the same time is often the most challenging thing. We have to set the dates first and recruit people around them rather than the other way round."

CPP Place Director, Creative Barking and Dagenham

Power Up! Think about...

Collaboration: Is the process of collaboration a separate art piece?

"...change and impact is about people and collaborations and.. the best way to do that is to build strong and positive connections. And then use those to support the communities we hope to engage with."

Volunteer agreement – example

TOOLS

Creative People and Places Hounslow developed a volunteer agreement to set out benefits and expectations of being a member of its Local Advisory Groups. You can use this to develop your own agreement to suit your local context.

Section heading	Example text
INTRODUCTION Who might be in the group? What you might do?	The Local Advisory Groups are made up of people who live and/or work in the local community who are interested in helping Creative People and Places Hounslow to bring creative events and activities to Hounslow. As a member of the Local Advisory Group, you will represent various sectors of the community and work with the CPP team as advisors. This is a voluntary role but one that is fundamental in the success of the project. The Local Advisory Groups will be making key decisions on the direction and content of the CPP programme and make sure that the interests and needs of the whole community are at the heart of every decision.
AIMS	▶ The development of four hubs in (Hounslow) to deliver creative and empowering activities. ▶ To programme high quality, high-impact outdoor art events in Hounslow town centre, tailored to local communities and developing new audiences. ▶ To support and develop local artists and art groups across the borough
[PANEL/GROUP NAME] CORE VALUES	▶ The Local Advisory Groups will represent a broad range of the community ▶ Equality and diversity will always be a key consideration
BENEFITS OF BEING ON THE [PANEL/GROUP NAME]	▶ Excellent networking opportunities ▶ To make key decisions that will have a positive impact on your community ▶ To receive professional development training in becoming an advisor for CPP ▶ To attend world class performances and work alongside nationally and internationally leading organisations in the creative sector
EXPECTATIONS OF THE [PANEL/GROUP NAME]	▶ To meet at least monthly/bi-monthly, with a member of the CPP team present to facilitate and offer support ▶ To be a place to discuss creative ideas and raise issues from the local community ▶ To help Creative People and Places find out what the needs of the community are … and the barriers in taking part in creative projects ▶ To give CPP advice and actively plan and deliver creative projects ▶ To listen to all viewpoints brought to the group and be respectful of all advisory members' opinions
INDIVIDUAL EXPECTATIONS, I WILL:	▶ Always make decisions with the interests of the local community in mind (not my own interest) ▶ Make the Local Advisory Groups aware if there is a conflict of interest ▶ Never benefit financially from Local Advisory Groups programming decisions ▶ Notify the CPP team if I am unable to attend a meeting or wish to leave the Local Advisory Groups ▶ If members are unable to uphold these expectations then they may be asked to step down from their advisory role under the discretion of the CPP team
SIGNATURE AND NAME	

Tool credit: adapted from a model developed by Creative People and Places Hounslow

03

COLLABORATIVE DELIVERY:

How might we share decisions during the delivery of projects?

Heart of Glass. Heather Peak of Studio Morison took more than 50 St Helens skaters on research trips to skate parks around the country. Photo credit: Stephen King

How might we share decisions during the delivery of projects?

Keeley joined an Ideas Test community catalyst panel this year to select a piece for its Small is Beautiful commission. The world premiere of *Mr and Mrs Polluto* took place at her local community hall. Photo courtesy of Keeley.

Shared decisions can take a variety of forms and be made at all stages of the arts programming cycle (for example, co-creation, co-commissioning or co-design). Collaborative decision-making might be imagined on a ladder of participation involving voices from the community at different levels within the arts programme, and at the most strategic level supporting arts organisations to share programming decisions from inception.

3.1 Establishing confidence and mutual respect

Different partners come to a project holding different levels of power. For example, traditionally artists and programmers have more power than the community in shaping arts programmes. Recognise this from the start and consider how to create an equitable ethos and environment.

TW3 Creative Space Event, designed and delivered by Hounslow Central Local Advisory Group in partnership with The BrickBox. Photo credit: David Monteith-Hodge

Approaches to establishing confidence and mutual respect
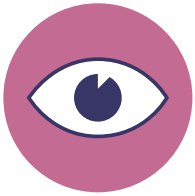
CASE STUDIES

▶ **Heart of Glass** has developed a large programme of co-creation projects, sharing decisions between multiple voices and perspectives. A mutual respect is essential to this, ensured by a Producer role responsible for ensuring a 'space' for the project "so everyone can be who they need to be in the room. Everybody plays to their strengths." (Director, Heart of Glass)

One project developed a skate park into a public artwork, working with a number of partners: the local police and local authority, who brought knowledge of the area; 51st skate (a local skateboard company) and the local skateboard community who brought knowledge of skateboarding, the town, and creative ideas; the artists who brought creative and build expertise; and Heart of Glass, who brought expertise in socially engaged arts projects.

It was crucial to support the skateboarders to respond with confidence. To do this they worked with a skateboard expert to develop appropriate language to talk about their ideas, and the team put on presentations, used social media and led research trips to other skateboard sites.

All partners then came together to decide on the design concept at workshops on design and build, and at social events. Due to the initial groundwork with each partner they were all invested in seeing the skate park happen. From this starting point, creating a platform for shared decision-making was achieved through the structure and feel of the workshops: a familiar location and considered presentation style gives people the space to be confident and say what they want. To support this, the local police came in non-uniform. Bringing the right expertise in facilitation from the artist and Producer was also key.
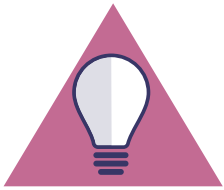
Power Up! Think about...

Reciprocity: Do we have reciprocal partnerships with our communities?

❝ **The tacit, or embodied knowledge, that exists in communities, is not always visible on the surface... it lives within the people who live in and share the history and ecology of that place."**
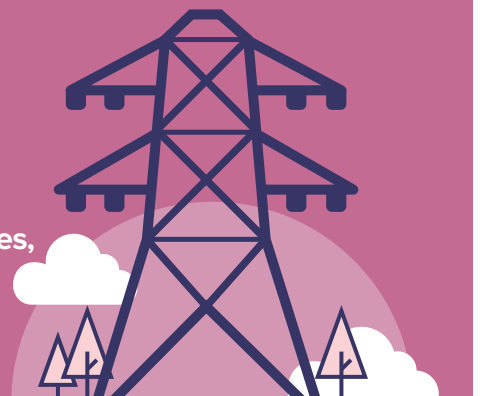
Tips for establishing confidence and mutual respect

TIPS

Sharing power

Make a list of your partners:

▶ Who holds the most and least power at the outset?

▶ What support might each partner need to gain the expertise and confidence to make decisions?

▶ What research trips or events might you take them to?

▶ Who are the right communicators and facilitators to bring on board?

▶ When partners meet to make decisions, what will help them feel comfortable: for example in the location, set-up, and timings? Will this be the same every time, or move to share amongst partners' preferred locations? (Consider the least powerful in particular: think about where they gather, where is familiar)

▶ Consider a shared language, verbal and visual: how do we speak to each other? How do we present ourselves?

Be transparent about the project process – for example, sharing the budget and spend allows them to see where opportunities and limitations lie.

66 Feeling powerless does not breed the confidence necessary to enter an unfamiliar venue."

**Mark Robinson, Faster but Slower, 2016**

Code of Conduct

In some Heart of Glass projects everyone signs up to shared values and behaviours in a code of conduct. Consider whether you need one, and what it might look like for your partners with their needs and backgrounds in mind. Will you draw this up together? Or is this more of a conversation that happens early on, or when a need arises (if there is an overpowering voice in the group, for example)? Who will be in the room with the expertise to be responsive, and champion mutual respect?

Power Up! Think about...

Power: Can decision-making be shared if one group of people have most of the power?

66 **...it must start with the conversation where people [can be] able to be 'honest about who has what type of power,' and [be] '... consciously aware of where we place our power.' "**
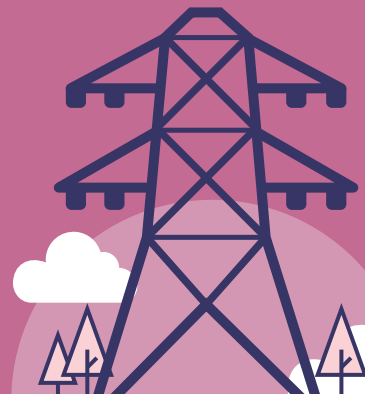
# **3.2** Achieving quality by drawing on different perspectives

Philippa Flip Miller, local radio DJ and Mildenhall Creative Forum member acting as a storyteller on Mildenhall Art Trail 2016. Market Place. Photo credit: Alex McElroy

Involving a spectrum of voices brings their broad experience and wealth of ideas to the process of shaping arts experiences. A shared decision can consider what quality means to different stakeholders. It therefore has a greater chance of resulting in artistic programming that is universally agreed to be excellent, both in the experience of those creating and attending, and in the quality of the artistic output itself.

An approach to achieving quality
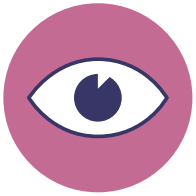
CASE STUDIES

▶ **bait** developed a set of guidelines to help them think about what quality looks like in the context of their programme at the planning and review stages. The guidelines were used during a project with Escape Family Support, an organisation supporting people in recovery from substance misuse and their carers. A small panel recruited an artist to work with two larger groups of both clients and carers to produce art for an exhibition at their centre.

The panel used the quality guidelines to help them write recruitment criteria for the artist. They used the principles to reflect and decide on what quality would look like to them in the artist's skillset, values and personality. The criteria were used during the selection process, and as a result the group chose an artist who was a good fit with their needs and interests, while providing the right amount of challenge.

Power Up! Think about...

Cultural capital can reinforce inequalities.
How do we value the cultural capital of our participants?

❝ **One CPP director suggests one way of consciously giving value to the cultural capital owned by their communities is working with them to create, 'work that is locally shaped, locally distinctive, determined by those involved and shaped to capture the attention of specific audiences/participants.' Another re-emphasised the need for mutual respect. 'Trust and confidence can only be built through partnerships that have mutual respect.... Authenticity is key. I think as a programme we give as much as we take from the groups we work with and treat each community member as part of the team, as equals. The groups we work with are like a family but this takes time and a lot of effort and resources to build and maintain.' ❞**

An approach to drawing on different perspectives
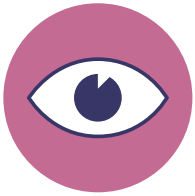
CASE STUDIES

▶ **Made in Corby** worked with the local community to commission a new musical in partnership with Perfect Pitch, a local company developing new British musicals.

Their commissioning process involved the local community on different scales: an initial public consultation group of 75; a smaller community panel of 10-25 from this group who made decisions throughout the process; and a theatre full of the general public who voted on their favourite of four proposed musicals.

The consultation group suggested themes which helped Perfect Pitch draft a brief for writers, reviewed by the community panel. Four shortlisted writing teams were paid a small commission to write three synopses, and the panel chose their favourite from each.

These four writing teams wrote 8-minute excerpts which were performed to the public by local musical theatre artists in an 'X Factor' style event. The final decision combined votes from the audience and the community panel (this time including industry experts invited by Perfect Pitch).

It was important to consider the balance of power in the final decision: the audience were large in number but engaged for this one event, while the panel had been on the journey from the start and understood the rationale behind the selection criteria they had developed. To reflect this, audience votes counted for two out of the total 12. The panel were unanimous, although they didn't agree with the audience. Of the two front-runners, the panel favoured the piece they felt best reflected Corby, which consultation had shown to be a priority of the local community. The musical, 'Danny Hero', went on to be produced by local theatre companies to wide local acclaim.

Made in Corby. Local cast in Danny Hero The Musical. Photo credit: Adam Balcomb

Tips for achieving quality by drawing on different perspectives
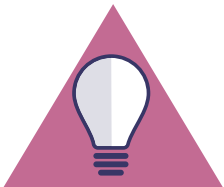
TIPS

Consider quality of experience and outcome for the participants and audiences, and how you will support those sharing decisions to do the same. See the artist's brief tool for prompt questions (p34).

What other objectives might influence the selection criteria?

Involving the community:
▶ Which partners have a say? (Even in a small group, some voices might have more weight than others. How will you be transparent about this weighting?)
▶ A group or panel who have been involved throughout the process will be more invested, with a deeper understanding of the objectives than a large general audience. How will this influence how much say each gets in the final decision?

Keep discussions focused:
Have a good Chair, be strict on time keeping and limit time to make a decision.

Make the process public to build a profile organically:
Those who are involved get to know the product, become invested and tell their friends about it.

You might include the broader public in decision-making:

Hold a public showing of artist's prototypes, such as a ticketed event, exhibition or to coincide with a local event.

▶ Have a set time for the audience to see the designs and vote
▶ Facilitate opportunities for people to ask questions
▶ Decide in advance what weight the public vote will have – e.g. equivalent to a number (say two votes) or a percentage of the final vote

66 At first they just thought they would be 'doing art' and conversations about ambition were new to them."

Arts for Wellbeing Manager, bait

Power Up! Think about...

Power: Can decision-making be shared if one group of people have most of the power?

66 **'Having the confidence to voice your opinion, when there are those in the room who already possess the know-how and the language to speak about work in a professional context is not easy.' ... 'what struck me was how thorough and detailed their observations... were. They had read everything in minute detail... checked the budgets, and websites of the artists. This is not a passive group of decision-making novices, but a very passionate and earnest group of people who take their responsibility seriously...' "**
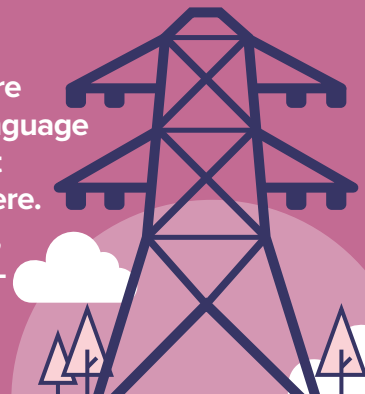
Quality guidelines
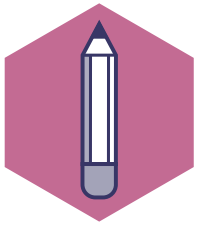
TOOLS

bait developed these guidelines to help think about the quality of a project during planning, and reflect on the quality of projects once they have been completed. They are used as guidance, not a rigid template.

For bait, quality can be informed by personal perspectives and evidence gathered from participants, audiences, artists and project partners – for example written feedback, observations, surveys, meeting notes etc. Consider how you might adapt these principles or create your own using this template.

AMBITION AND RISK TAKING
The participants/artists/curators/project partners challenge themselves with this work

CONCEPT IN CONTEXT
It is an interesting idea, developed and presented with the right people in the right place at the right time

MEANING AND RELEVANCE
It means something to the people taking part or attending and it has something to say about the world in which we live

INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTICITY
The work is honest and reflects the ideas of the people who are involved in making it

PROCESS
Care, attention and the right amount of time is given to the process

COLLABORATIVE OWNERSHIP
Participants and partners are involved in making decisions about how the project is delivered

PRODUCTION AND PERFORMANCE VALUES
It is well produced and presented to a high standard

INSPIRES CURIOSITY
The work sparks curiosity and conversations with the people who engage

ASPIRATION
Next step opportunities are clear for people taking part and there is an aspiration for longer term development

SUSTAINABILITY AND REPLICABILITY
Elements of the project can be repeated, developed or sustained by individuals and groups in SE Northumberland

Tool credit: bait quality guidelines, developed with Mark Robinson, Thinking Practice, 2014

How to develop an artist's brief collaboratively

Transported and **bait** shaped 'prompt' questions to help a community panel or group develop an artist's brief. The prompts helped Transported and bait include different voices in the commissioning of artists for public art and co-creation work.
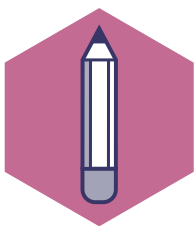
TOOLS

Consider quality through and through

Keep a focus on what will make a quality, innovative experience and artistic output for the people you are working with. This will give your project the best chance of success in engagement, enjoyment and legacy. In an effort to maintain excellence, Transported ask: "Why should the residents of [place] have second best?" (Transported's Engagement and Empowerment Plan)

Work with the group to develop a list of criteria you want the artist to meet:

▶ About the artwork – what it needs to achieve/respond to, context, location (you can get more creative responses from artists if you leave the artform itself open)

▶ About the artist – their approach, values etc

You might refer to existing criteria, such as project objectives or bait's quality guidelines (p33).

Think of prompt questions that will help the group discuss what is relevant to them, their local area and what they value. For example:

About our local area (identifying themes):

▶ What do you think is important/distinctive?

▶ What would you celebrate?

▶ What would you like to explore?

▶ What is 'every day'? What is extraordinary?

▶ What inspires you?

About the artist and artwork:

▶ What personal qualities do you value?

▶ What are your ambitions for your experience on this project?

▶ What are your ambitions for the artwork?

▶ How you want people to feel when they see it?

▶ What do you want them to say or do as a result?

▶ What would make this project bold, original, innovative?

▶ Thinking about everything we have discussed, what themes would you like to explore with an artist?

▶ What personal qualities would you like the artist to have?

Keep questions open but keep the conversation moving. Make notes on a flip chart as you go – group them in a way that makes sense to you (e.g. by question or theme).

Summarise these themes and qualities on a final big sheet of paper so the group can see the brief coming together.

Write these into a brief and take it back to the group. Invite discussion to form the final version.

Interview shortlisting grid
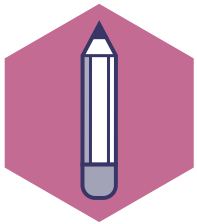
TOOLS

Transported developed this shortlisting grid for their community panel to record and score artists' responses to a commission brief. This supported the process of the group deciding and selecting an artist for projects including 'From Stump to Sluice' (2017).

Use this tool as a group to develop selection criteria from the brief into interview questions, for example "must have a love of art" might become "what do you love about art?" Avoid closed (yes/no) questions.

Shortlisting grid

NAME OF APPLICANT:

POSITION APPLIED FOR:

Please explain your ratings by making brief notes in the relevant box using evidence from the application form.

| Selection criteria: (examples from Transported)	Excellent evidence	Good evidence	Satisfactory evidence	Some evidence	Little evidence	No Evidence
	5	4	3	2	1	0
Have they provided examples of skills, experience and personal attributes they can bring to the project?						
Does their proposal have the potential to capture people's attention and motivate them to engage with the arts?						
Do they demonstrate how they have used a highly creative approach in past commissions to encourage people and motivate them to contribute to an activity?						
Have they demonstrated strong community engagement in previous commissions?						
Do their initial ideas fit the brief and project criteria?						
Have they provided examples of their capability of leading a workshop?						
Have they acknowledged what has inspired them to want to work in the area? Is their work relevant to that area?						
Supporting material						
Cost/ Budget						
Add up all your scores to find the total:						

Tool credit: developed by Transported

3.3 Building on themes and ideas from the community

Transported 'From Stump to Sluice' project. Clay fish making session in Boston market place. Photo credit: Lauren Williams

Another way to share power is to invite ideas for artistic content from a wide range of stakeholders to be considered by a decision-making group. Consider the support that community members might need to contribute. This might range from a workshop where a facilitator gathers ideas and groups or filters them, to providing guidance on how to write a full project plan or funding application.

Approaches to building on community themes and ideas
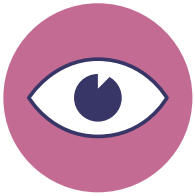
CASE STUDIES

▶ **Transported** worked with local community groups to co-develop themes for public art commissions that are specific to, respond to and resonate with the local area, and instil a sense of ownership in the people who live with and experience them.

▶ The lead artist ran printmaking workshops, encouraging discussions and personal stories about (for example) the area, the history, the wildlife. Emerging themes were recorded, and were presented with the prints to the programme's Action Group for further discussion. The themes were consolidated by the group and informed the artist's concept for the artwork.

▶ The community will continue to be involved in the design of the artworks: a Facebook page invites suggestions, and the community are invited to co-creation workshops to create an element of the design "giving them the opportunity to seek out their part in the finished artwork" (Lead Artist).

▶ **Ideas Test** designed a programme entirely made up of ideas sourced from the community by providing funding and support for applicants to deliver their projects themselves. By handing power to their potential audiences the programme had genuine local relevance and went far beyond what the programme staff could have created alone.

▶ The deciding panel include Community Catalysts (local community ambassadors) and people who have formerly received programme funding, representing the geography of the area. They developed accessible application criteria and promoted them locally. Applicants received support through training and online guidance, and an 'Experiments Ambassador' helped them produce a practical plan.

▶ By handing decisions over to the community, Ideas Test learned a great deal about them, both from what was and was not funded. They remained engaged with funded projects and used data gathered by them to identify and target under-represented audiences. A great success is the emerging local creative network: commissioned partners have started businesses or applied for external funding.
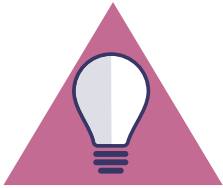
Power Up! Think about...

Collaboration: What ways are the right ways?

❝ **It does mean finding ways to work that celebrate the history, knowledge and skills everyone brings to the table. This means truly collaborative work cannot be tied to a particular product or a rehearsed outcome. It is always a form of improvisation."**

Tips for building on community themes and ideas

TIPS

▶ Don't assume that because something works in one place it will work in another. Local context is key. Investigate, make local allies. Provide a framework and support for people to explore their own ideas.

▶ When seeking proposals from the community, frame your invite in accessible language and promote it in person in the community. Word of mouth will spread the message and enthuse people much more than just having it on your website.

▶ Remember it's not a test – it doesn't matter if it doesn't work. It's about exploring ideas rather than producing a fully formed art project.

▶ Use the prompt questions in the artist's brief tool (p34) in this toolkit as a starting point for co-developing themes.

" Not everyone wants to talk about their ideas and the same for getting their hands dirty, so providing a mix of ways for people to interact we can try and involve as many as possible."

Lead Artist, Transported

" The expertise and understanding of each other has enabled us to work more deeply with these people…[they] are using those new skills in new ways."

Director, Ideas Test

" The challenge to one's own assumptions about what people would like is extremely healthy."

Director, Ideas Test

Power Up! Think about…

Reciprocity: What is the journey towards mutual respect?

" …having … to move very deliberately beyond 'assumptions we had made about their needs' to, 'a clarity of understanding' between the CPP and the community. This has enabled them as an organisation to, 'edge beyond people's (and Local Authority's) expectations and misconceptions.' "

Community guidance: Developing ideas into plans

Ideas Test invited their local community to submit funding applications with ideas for arts projects. These funded projects produced a local creative programme designed entirely with ideas from the community. They learned a great deal about local interest and what works in their context.

Ideas Test developed the following questions to help people consider their own ideas for creative projects from several angles during the application process, and turn them into more developed proposals.
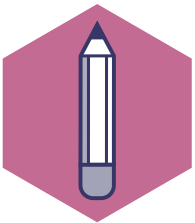
TOOLS

How you might use this tool

If you have funding or a larger budget:
Follow Ideas Test's lead and invite applications which will be funded if successful. This is a great way to see a spectrum of ideas and interests, find out what your community wants and test how their ideas might work.

If you have a small budget:
Hold an event or festival and invite applications for activities, performances or other participatory arts initiatives that can be contained within the time and space of your event. Fund successful ideas (fully or partially) – a smaller scale version of a full programme.

If you have no budget:
Share the questions with community partners who may wish to collaborate on a project or initiative, or who may come to you for advice or seeking support for their ideas. Working up an idea together in this way will put you in a strong starting position to seek funding and/or run a project together, sharing power and decisions from the start.

In all cases, choose the questions that work best for you and adapt them to fit your context.

Ideas Test Small Experiment Application Questions
▶ What is your project called?
▶ What will it test and why?
▶ What is innovative and different about your idea?
▶ Where will your project take place?
▶ Who is this event for?
▶ How will your activity explore new ways to get people involved?
▶ How will people benefit from your plans?
▶ How is high quality art/creativity a part of your activity?
▶ Are there gaps in your knowledge and plan or other risks that you already know about?
▶ Will you be able to carry out this activity in future without more public funding?
▶ What would help you in your plans?
▶ Are you planning any evaluation of your own? If so can you tell us about this?
▶ Rough/estimated budget?
▶ Sample/illustration?

Tool credit: adapted from a model developed by Ideas Test

04
REFLECTING TOGETHER:

How might we reflect on past activity together and make decisions about future programming?

Scene Maker Simon developing HeckmondLIGHT with Creative Scene. Photo credit: Len Grant

4.1 Shared reflection and planning

Appetite's Big Feast 2016. The Aperitif by Wet Picnic. Appetite's Supper Club are involved in the programming of the Big Feast. Photo: Clara Lou Photography

Reflecting on the process – successes, challenges and learning – is central to understanding the difference it made, and how future work might be planned. It is important to include all stakeholder voices in this conversation and CPP projects have developed or adapted a variety of tools to help them do this. Consider who the process has made a difference to, thinking about stakeholders and audiences involved in different ways and at different levels of engagement.

Use these tips and examples as part of your evaluation to include community reflection in your reporting.

An approach to shared reflection and planning
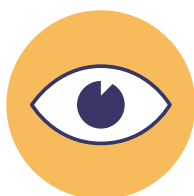
CASE STUDIES

▶ **Appetite** has a monthly supper club made up of representatives from 'community hubs' (community groups from across Stoke-on-Trent who play an active role in the devising, development and co-production of art events and activities). Members come together to share learning, discuss art and make decisions on the future direction of the programme.

Socially, the supper club is very important to the group. Coming together to eat food that is provided for you sets a warm atmosphere and makes people feel valued, which in turn helps facilitate sharing and conversation.

The supper club uses participatory research techniques and creative tools from the Get Talking Network to make shared decisions. They review recent arts events and suggest how this might influence future programming. They even use the techniques to decide how the supper club itself works.

▶ Developed by the Creative Communities Unit of Staffordshire University, Get Talking is a process, a set of principles underpinning participatory research, and a series of creative engagement tools to use or adapt. The Creative Communities Unit made some into attractive, artistic tools to suit the evaluation of Appetite. Dot voting became 'quali-tea pots' using sugar cubes in tea pots, and a portable 6ft tree was built for people to add wishes or issues on the leaves.

Power Up! Think about...

Values: How do we measure value in the arts?

❝ **Sometimes it's just about those small conversations we have with people who have been touched or affected by an experience.**❞
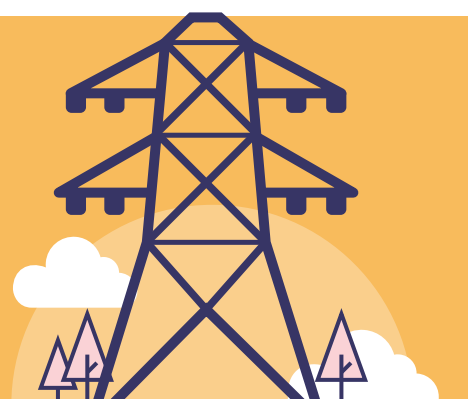
Tips for shared reflection and planning

TIPS

You can find a wealth of tools in the **Get Talking Network Practitioner pack** with toolbag, including:

Circle diagrams:
"a useful tool to analyse the links between community organisations or between the organisations and the people in the community."

On the one hand...
"an exercise which helps groups of people to share positive and negative reactions to a situation."

Issue trees:
"useful for facilitating more analysis and probing on issues that have emerged."

Impact/implementation chart:
"enables you to explore the feasibility of solutions with people."

Power Up! Think about...

Reciprocity: How do we develop reciprocal relationships with our communities?

66 The importance of taking time for shared 'reflection' as part of the learning process was underlined. 'That way you can analyse whether everyone felt what they had to contribute was equally valued.' As was the need to be kind to each other and not get overwhelmed by the, 'constant fear of not getting it right for everyone.' **"**

Issue trees
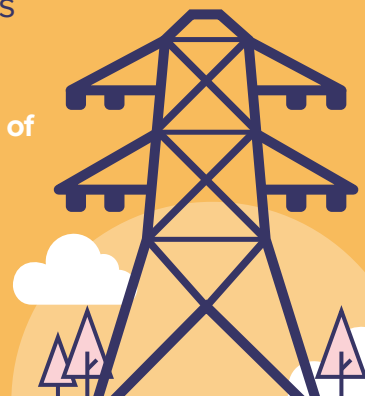
Appetite used adapted versions of reflective activities from the Get Talking methodology, with a creative twist to fit in with the ethos of their programme. Developed by the Creative Communities Unit of Staffordshire University, Get Talking is a process, a set of principles underpinning participatory research, and a series of creative engagement tools to use or adapt.

Appetite used a giant issue tree at events. You might simply use it as a place for people to leave their wishes on a leaf, or you might use it to facilitate reflection. For example, you could explore challenges that arose during a project or event and how you might do things differently next time.

Issue Trees are useful for facilitating more analysis and probing on issues that have emerged. The tools help you to explore the underlying causes and sources of a situation. This makes it easier to decide on which issues could be addressed and identify potential solutions.
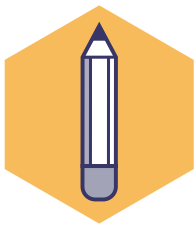
TOOLS

Stage one: Problem tree

▶ Decide what the problem is that you will use the Tree to help solve.

"Why didn't more families attend our festival?"

▶ Gather people together who are experiencing the problem, and are willing to share their knowledge.

▶ Facilitators start to help people to create the Tree by placing the problem on the 'tree trunk'. Write each reason on a separate card or post-it note and stick each one on the tree.

▶ Use the tree shape to group the reasons behind the problem. Place them on the roots of the tree. Keep asking the question 'Why?' to help probe.

"Family activities poorly advertised – lack of knowledge of local family networks to promote"

▶ Use the branches to explore the effects of the problem.

**"Festival perceived as for adults only – an exclusive feel to an event in our local park – families alienated"**

▶ It is important to facilitate the initial Problem Tree well. At this point be sure that the root causes do relate to the original problem. It is very helpful to use movable sticky notes so that the root causes can be rearranged during the exercise. If the Problem Tree is done well each root will follow a logical sequence and it should be possible to see the links.

Image courtesy of Appetite

Issue trees
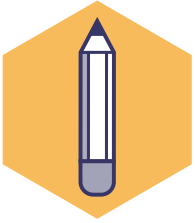
TOOLS

Stage two: Solution tree

Once you have explored the reasons behind the issues, focus on one root at a time and turn each negative statement into a positive statement. It may be easiest to place the solutions directly on top of the problems that they replace.

"Family activities well-advertised"

"Develop knowledge of local family networks"

"Research local family groups and invite to be part of shaping the next festival"

"Discuss which of the solutions are achievable and how they might be achieved"

Look at the bottom of each root. Does the solution give you the first thing you need to do?

Visit the full **Participatory Appraisal Practitioner pack** for a comprehensive resource of reflective activities.

Tool credit: developed by Kate Gant and John Rowley, Participatory Training in partnership with Staffordshire University and NHS Scotland.

Thank you

The guidance in this toolkit is drawn from the experience of 21 CPP Places around England, from their reflective and evaluation literature; and from interviews with the ten Places credited at the beginning. Thanks to all who gave their time and contributed learning from on-the-ground experience of shared decision-making. Thanks also to Sarah Davies from A New Direction for her invaluable enthusiasm and drive in bringing this resource together.

❝ It's about demystifying the process of arts commissioning and creation for local people, showing them what is involved so they gradually become familiar and feel they could take on bits themselves."

Creative Producer, Creative Scene

Further reading and resources

▶ Learn more about **Creative People and Places**

▶ Read the think piece **Power Up**, by Chrissie Tiller, developed at the same time as this resource.

The story of CPP's learning over the first three years:

▶ Ruth Melville and Ben Morgan, 2015. **Building Whilst Flying**

▶ Mark Robinson, 2016. **Faster but Slower, Slower but Faster: Creative People and Places Learning 2016**

▶ Research into quality and excellence across CPP programmes:
   Mark Robinson and Jamie Buttrick, 2016. 'What it does to you: Excellence in CPP'

Shared decision-making is also being explored widely across other sectors and in other contexts and settings. See the following for alternative ideas and sources of inspiration:

▶ Tips and tools for reaching consensus, by People and Planet:
   Participatory decision-making: a guide for groups (accessed July 2017)

▶ Further examples of activities for making decisions in groups, by Friends of the Earth:
   Participatory decision-making tools (accessed July 2017)

▶ Guidance and tools to support participatory decision-making in urban governance, developed by UN-Habitat:
   Tools to support participatory urban decision-making (accessed July 2017)