

Creative
Industries
Report

Aspect

Beyond the Academy: Improving Creative Industries-HEI Engagement

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September 2021



Recent research (Rouverol, 2021; Stockley-Patel, 2021) drawing on interviews with social sciences researchers and Creative Industries professionals as part of the [Aspect Deep Dive Project 2021](#) evidences various ways in which sector engagement is valuable for creative and cultural sector organisations. Evidence suggests that existing models and structures for research engagement could be improved upon, addressing current engagement challenges. These key findings outline areas of best practice for Creative Industries professionals interested in brokering, facilitating, and strengthening partnerships with universities and academics.

Finding:

CCIs generally agreed that substantive understandings need to be in place before establishing a partnership. This included identifying motives, needs, and interests on both sides, and a focus on set-up. They also recognised partnerships are fundamentally about relationship-building. Shared values were seen as essential to a successful partnership.

Best Practice:

To ensure proper set-up, allow adequate time for dialogue with the potential partner. Isolate your respective aims and motives. What does each partner need, and where do these needs overlap? You might consider a memorandum of understanding or a formal agreement.

Finding:

Workloads can be severe during the academic calendar which often affects availability of time to devote to partnerships. Some academics felt CCIs may not fully understand these pressures and urged greater understanding.

Best Practice:

Be clear about your needs in partnership; set clear but flexible deadlines with your partners. During set-up discuss how you will approach communication, delivery of materials, and responsibilities to ensure clarity of mission.

Finding:

CCIs found that sometimes partnerships did not allow sufficiently for flexibility and change as the project developed. This meant that external changes might negatively affect a partnership where partners have not prepared for complicating events.

Best Practice:

Systems of practice, even those developed for a short-term project, should not be rigid. Plan to reassess and reevaluate your project along the way. To create work that is responsive, co-created and co-produced requires a measure of flexibility. Consider this as part of your ethical framework.

Finding:

CCIs recognised that good practice and ethical practice were not the same things. Good practice represents safeguarding, financial accountability and risk assessing, etc.; whereas ethical practice is more relational, asks us to question our integrity and consider questions such as inclusivity, equity, and fairness in the partnership.

Best Practice:

Interrogate the ethics of your project. Examine what--and who--you are bringing into the room as you engage with prospective partners. Collaboration should feature transparency; it is vital to be clear about agendas, interests, and equity across the project.

Finding:

From better understanding audience diversity data to scoping future market opportunities, academics can add value to CCIs in a wide variety of tangible ways. For example, CCI organisations have used insights and data gathered through university partnerships to strengthen funding applications and demonstrate value to stakeholders.

1: Academic data from interviews with 26 academics from 7 universities across the Yorkshire and Humber and Greater Manchester regions. Industry data from 20 interviews across the breadth of the Creative Industries. A full account of the data and methodology can be found here: [REPORT LINK](#) and [REPORT LINK](#).

Best Practice:

University business engagement teams are well placed to connect your CCI organisation to academics whose expertise can support your mission in various ways. Building relationships with academics and universities can lead to opportunities for collaboration and partnership in future.

Finding:

Working with academics does not necessarily rely upon direct monetary investment. Oftentimes, CCI partners provide in-kind support, for example, through staff time or access to their facilities. In some instances, academics are able to draw on university or research council funding to support CCI involvement.

Best Practice:

Be transparent about the types of support and contributions you are able to provide to an academic or university when seeking or building research partnerships. It is common that CCI organisations provide in-kind support (e.g. staff time) and that the university partner is able to fund the academic's contribution. Sometimes, business engagement teams are best placed to secure funding for research engagement.

About Aspect

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.

Find out more at www.aspect.ac.uk

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