

Evolution of a Cultural Education Partnership

The average time taken for a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) to go from first meetings to project delivery is just short of three years. Although there may be ways to speed up this process, fundamentally CEPs are about change and change takes time, sustained effort, work and resource from all involved.

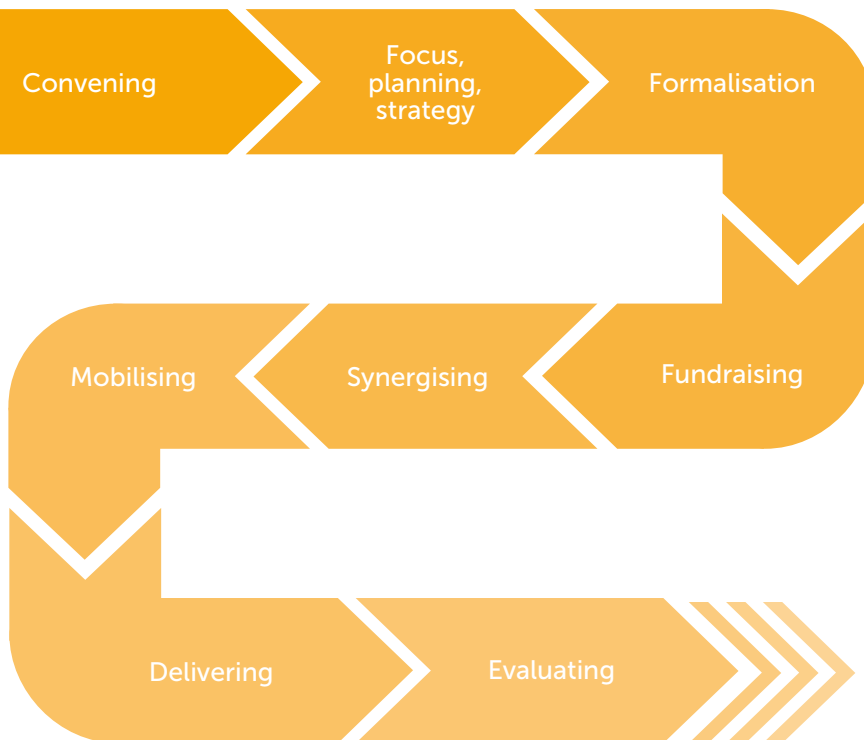
It takes time to:

- Develop the strategy, perspective and behaviours of partner organisations
- Persuade arts, culture and other organisations to see why they should develop work with children and young people

- Encourage organisations and individuals to embrace partnership working, with specialisms and new agendas beyond their traditional area of expertise
- Persuade decision-makers in local authorities and schools of the value of arts and culture for children and young people
- Carve out a shared CEP vision, focus and strategy

All of these changes need to take place in order for a CEP to be successful, but it is possible to speed these up through efficiency and learning from others.

“ If people aren’t used to networking, it just takes time to have the conversations that eventually cumulate into a network. ”



Cultural Education Partnerships work through a number of consistent developmental activities to get to the delivery stage. These will not all be undertaken in the same way, or with the same emphasis. The table below represents a ‘model’ CEP evolution based on the creation of a CEP with the benefit of hindsight. As well as outlining each step of the process, it looks at what questions might need to be asked to help anticipate any potential barriers, and plan for what resources might be required along the way.

Figure 1: Linear CEP development, following the ‘model’ development process overleaf. The CEP would work sequentially through each stage.

A 'model' CEP development process

The table below outlines all the processes that make up the development of a Cultural Education Partnership – from initially bringing

together partners, through to project delivery. A CEP may not follow these steps in the same order, but they are all important parts of the development

journey. The table also contains some important questions to consider at each stage.

Processes	Questions to ask
<p>Convening</p> <p>The first stage in development of a CEP concerns the bringing together of an initial group of potential partners. In most cases in the South East, this has been a combined effort between Artsworld staff and committed individuals in local organisations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who can help mobilise and recruit other people? • What is the invitation? • What might success look like?
<p>Leadership</p> <p>Once partners have been brought together, CEPs must decide who will lead and what that leadership will look like.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who will lead? How will your CEP be run, maintained and impact achieved? • How well does the work of the CEP fit the agenda of any lead partner organisation/s? • Who will provide administrative support?
<p>Focusing and needs analysis</p> <p>One of the first tasks is to work out where to focus attention and effort, combining an analysis of needs, available resources, opportunities and priorities of individual partners and the CEP.</p> <p>CEPs variously use data analysis, consultation (particularly with children and young people), other local priorities, and their own insights to feed into where the greatest need is.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where should the CEP focus its efforts? • What focus will draw on your resources to address an identified need and galvanise the partnership? • How will you build an informed understanding of the locality? • Have you asked children and young people what they want? • Have you talked to schools and local agencies/ authorities about how arts and culture could support their agendas? • What available data could inform your focus?
<p>Planning and strategy</p> <p>CEPs have to work out how they will work towards their agreed vision and set of priorities through partnership strategy development and planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you motivate and organise partners to come together around an agreed objective? • What are partners already doing, and what could they take on? • What activity should the CEP itself take on? • Who will do what, by when? What will they need to do so?
<p>Formalising</p> <p>Formalising partnerships can be a challenge and take considerable time, discussion and effort in the early stages. CEPs might need to formalise a Terms of Reference, particularly if partners need clarity on their participation; they will need to formalise a Business Plan, particularly if required for funding applications.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why and for whom do you need formal agreements? • What examples of formal agreements can you draw on from other CEPs? • What is the most practical way of developing them?
<p>Fundraising</p> <p>Raising and leveraging funds (cash and in-kind) to cover running costs is a central part of a CEP's work programme. In the South East, Artsworld provides dedicated funds. Building readiness for these is a major priority. CEPs also have to raise significant match funds.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What resources do you already have across the CEP? • Where are the potential resources relevant to your CEP's focus? • What will you need to access those resources?

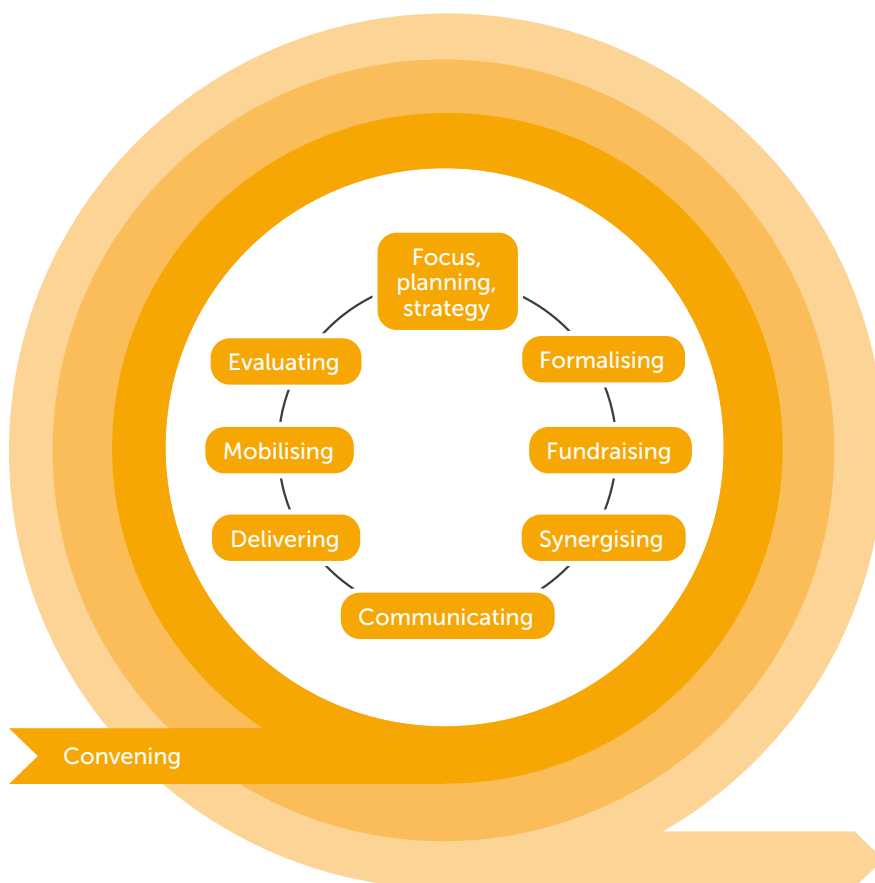
Processes	Questions to ask
<p>Synergising</p> <p>There are a number of ways CEP partners can develop synergies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting mapping exercises to identify the resources (human, financial, arts-based etc.) around the table, so as to inform future CEP strategy; • Informally uncovering each other's programmes of work and resources through discussion and updates; • Running Expo events for schools to understand the opportunities offered by CEP partners, which also give all involved an understanding of each other's work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities, agendas and resources exist across the CEP partnership that are relevant to your focus? • How might these be brought together in new ways to support the focus?
<p>Mobilising</p> <p>Much of a CEP's activity focuses on building capacity for arts and cultural development in schools and other settings for children and young people. This might comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convincing schools of the value of arts and culture for children and young people, both in its own right and in support of other objectives; • Supporting schools, through training and project activity, to develop skills and capacity for arts and culture; • Supporting schools to build a strategy for arts and cultural development as part of their development planning, including with Artsmark. <p>CEPs also work to mobilise other agencies, such as health, crime, economy and employment commissioners, to harness the power of arts and culture to support their agendas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will your CEP mobilise schools and other settings, supporting their needs in pursuit of your focus? • How will you leverage the support of other agencies, and persuade and support them to harness arts and culture?
<p>Delivering</p> <p>A primary focus of many CEPs is the delivery of arts and cultural activity with or for children and young people. The range of projects is huge but might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects in or with schools • Whole community projects, such as festivals • Thematically targeted projects, such as those addressing mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where, specifically, does it make sense for your CEP to deliver new activity as a partnership, for its focus? • How will this delivery be resourced and managed, funded and contracted? • Is it possible for delivery to start early, in the name of the CEP, to create impact and catalyse partner retention, partner recruitment and fundraising?
<p>Evaluating</p> <p>CEPs need to evaluate the outcomes of their projects and funded activity. The extent to which a CEP's portfolio overall is evaluated, either by the CEP, Artsworld or others, varies. There appears to be more evaluation of the impact of CEP Delivery work, and perhaps less of the Synergising and Mobilising stages. Artsworld currently collects centralised data on all South East CEPs for Arts Council England.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will your CEP measure the impact of its Synergy, Mobilisation and Delivery activity?
<p>Communicating</p> <p>As partnerships designed to be catalysts for a wide growth of activity, communication is vital. CEPs communicate amongst partners, amongst target audiences and participants, and with other stakeholders, including funders, donors, and other agencies. Principal means of communication are word of mouth, websites, newsletters, and events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the different audiences for the CEP and how can they be effectively communicated with? • In the early stages, how will you communicate the CEP's purpose and focus to recruit partners and raise support? • How will you communicate between partners? • How will you communicate with your audience/s in appropriate ways and at optimal times?

Ongoing CEP development

Following the initial development, the partnership needs to continue to evolve. Many CEPs continue to cycle through the processes outlined (see figure 2). CEPs will need clarity at each stage, and to stick to decisions made, but that does not mean needing to have clarity as to the next 5 years of work after 6 months. There are two principle reasons for this ongoing need for evolution:

1. CEPs are partnerships. As the partnership of the CEP changes, so will the CEP itself;
2. The experience of existing CEPs suggests that if they approach development too rigidly, or if too much time is spent perfecting any one stage, then the CEP may lose both momentum and the contribution of partners. The CEP needs to form an initial partnership and nurture this by communicating its needs and aims as they evolve. This will require a needs analysis, but CEPs should guard against dedicating too much time and resource to a comprehensive needs analysis, as this is likely to lead to delays in communication with partners.

Figure 2: Evolving CEP development. The CEP works cumulatively through the different development processes, depending on need, and continues to grow with time.



About this work

The content for this resource has been drawn from a longer developmental evaluation that was commissioned by Artsworld and undertaken by Ben Sandbrook/World Pencil in 2019 to identify what happens, and what works, in setting up and running a Cultural Education Partnership (CEP) in the South East. The research has been undertaken through data and written materials analysis, 26 semi-structured interviews with Artsworld and CEP representatives, and an online survey completed by 30 CEP representatives.



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