

# Identifying the aims and vision of a Cultural Education Partnership

Cultural Education Partnerships exist to improve the quantity and quality of arts and cultural opportunities for children and young people. Their aim is to harness the personal, social, education and career impact those opportunities can bring to young people and the communities around them.

## CEP goals:

1. Develop their own unique vision and aims, in response to the needs of the local area
2. Ensure resources are focussed in the right area

“ Having a strong, shared and well-identified aim and focus is central to a CEP. CEPs are in many ways about people and organisations sharing and changing things.

## Identifying and communicating aim and focus

It is important for CEPs to articulate and communicate their aim and focus. The ability to shape this narrative is a valuable way to galvanise CEP partnerships and ensure everyone has the same understanding of their work which can also be used to advocate, fundraise and bring in new partners.

“ Having a strongly articulated vision can help support and drive partnership.

### Strategy and planning

Steps that can be used for CEP focusing and planning:

1. Consider the landscape of the CEPs locality, and the context – what is the existing infrastructure?
2. Carry out a needs analysis – review existing data, and speak to target audiences, to ensure the CEPs activities will respond to local need.
3. Map out the resources available within the CEP itself and partner organisations, as well as externally available support such as fundraising.
4. Identify where the CEP can have the most impact on local need, and use this to shape a strategic focus and set of priorities.
5. Record, and communicate, the CEPs strategy, including the data/methods used to shape its focus and priorities.

## Understanding the landscape and context

It is critical for each Cultural Education Partnership to understand the needs of its local area, enabling them to shape an approach that works well for (potential) partners and builds on any existing work.

**Data can have particular advantages such as relative neutrality, and greater granularity/detail that can reveal localised pockets of need otherwise hidden.**

## Context: What is the landscape for our CEP?

### Geography:

- What are the socio-demographic and geographic characteristics?
- Eg. Is it rural, coastal or urban? Consistent or diverse?
- Where are the greatest needs?

### Sources of funding:

- Are there identifiable sources of funding that might be available or relevant?
- Eg. philanthropists, central government funding streams, significant industry etc.?

### Infrastructure and agendas:

- What relevant networks already exist?
- What are the priorities of local authorities/other local agencies such as universities and creative sector economy?
- Do they have an existing commitment to arts and cultural learning and the capacity to support it?

### Arts and culture:

- How strong and collaborative is the arts/cultural infrastructure, funding and support for children and young people including schools?
- Is the arts and culture sector well-co-ordinated and regularly collaborating, mutually independent, or tending to compete? What would the competition map look like?

## Needs analysis

All CEPs should conduct a thorough needs analysis to inform their strategy. This is likely to include:

**Consultation** with children and young people, and other 'target audiences', such as a school and those that have strategic perspective relevant to the locality.

**Locality-based social and economic agendas and policies**, e.g. within the local authority, Local Economic Partnership, and/or Arts Council England.

**Available data**, including socio-economic and other data from the Office for National Statistics, partner-held data, Local Authority-held data, social media analysis, and surveys the CEP might develop itself.

**Partners' own insights** and intuitions, based on experience and current work.

## Needs: What needs should our CEP prioritise?

### Consultation:

- What needs do children and young people, schools and others articulate?

### Other agendas:

- What needs are local priorities addressing?
- What local or national agendas could we support?

### Data insights:

- What can we learn from the data?

### Partner insights:

- What needs intelligence do we have round the table?

## Understanding resources

Cultural Education Partnerships need to demonstrate how their resources can bring about the achievement of a shared goal. Resources may include:

**Partners:** Partners contribute their own time, expertise, connections, and other resources, making them potentially the CEP's most significant resource. They may be able to share resources strategically and effectively to maximise what they already have.

**Internal leverage:** Organisations may be able to respond to, and align with, the CEP's strategy by taking research and needs analysis into account and adapting their own offering.

**Broader leverage:** As a coherent body the partnership may have a collective expertise and scale. A strategic group outlook could support other local agendas such as health and well-being, crime and

## Resources: What current and potential resource can the CEP draw on?

### Partners:

- What can partners contribute through their time, expertise, connections and shareable resources?

### Broader leverage:

- How can the CEP achieve its aims through influencing the activities of other organisations and agencies?

### Fundraising:

- What funds can the CEP feasibly, and advisably, raise?

### Internal leverage:

- How can the CEP achieve its aims through partner organisations' own activity?

antisocial behaviour, or community regeneration. Where a CEP can demonstrate the impact of its work it may also be able to leverage funding towards arts and cultural activity.

**Fundraising:** Beyond initial set-up funding, the CEP may raise

additional funds including private income, trust/foundation grants, commissions and tenders. Each will have particular requirements such as, strategic and business planning, degree of partnership formalisation, risk management, bid-writing, project management, banking etc.

## Resource and need mapping

To build unity between its own resources and those of partner organisations, CEPs need to build an understanding of the resources and needs around the table. Such as:

- Areas of skills, expertise, experience and knowledge relevant to CEP activity, such as communication, advocacy, planning, delivery, artforms, consultation etc.
- Agendas and priorities (including thematic and locality-based priorities) that partners are already focussing on.

- Activity that partners are undertaking currently or in the future.
- Contacts and relations that CEP partners have with schools and other target audiences and potential partners.
- Resources such as venues, equipment, instruments and funds, particularly identifying under-utilised resources.
- The needs, challenges and barriers of partners that the CEP might be able to address.
- The gaps in resources that the CEP needs to address to fulfil its objectives and respond to need.

“ Resource mapping can be highly sensitive and needs to be carefully managed. Often people are guarded about giving away confidential information and resources that might be considered to hold competitive value or advantage.”

## Focusing and strategy for a partnership approach

The Cultural Education Partnership will use the needs analysis and resource mapping exercise to identify where it can make the most impact and set out its priorities.

Guiding principles:

- **Synergy-focused:** A fundamental principle of the CEP's strategy might be that the CEP will only do the things that it can do well as a partnership, and potentially that it will only do things that can be done as a partnership.
- **Competitive overlap:** It may prove difficult for CEP partners if they see the focus of the CEP, or its work programme, as being very close to that of their own organisation.
- **Partner relevance:** Equally, it may be difficult for CEP partners to engage pro-actively with the CEP programme if they see the CEP's priorities as too distant from, or not relevant to, their organisation's priorities.
- **Partnership appropriate:** Partnership working can be rewarding but resource-intensive. Is the CEP's strategy only deliverable through the CEP partnership or would some or all of it be more effectively delivered through individual organisations?
- **Breadth and scope:** A CEP's focus needs to be focused enough to be of relevance to partners but not exclusively relevant to only a few partners. A CEP's focus needs to be big enough to be ambitious, but not unachievable.

## Focus and approach: Where and how can we make the greatest impact?

### Agreed aim and focus:

- Distilling context, need and resources, where can the CEP have greatest impact?

### Resourcefulness:

- To achieve this aim, how can we draw on partners' resources and influence, and how can the CEP fundraise?

### Alignment:

- How does our strategy fit, or compete, with partners' own agendas, and the broader context?

### Strategy and planning:

- Coalescing around our agreed aim, which partners will take on which actions when, with what, and how will we pull it all together?

## Resourcefulness

A CEP strategy is a partnership strategy: it will need to be resourceful not just about how it brings resources into the CEP, but also how it leverages the resources across the partners.

- What needs to be done that partners are already doing, or could adapt to or expand to?
- What new activities need to be undertaken?
- How will ownership and intellectual property be handled, and risk and responsibility managed?
- Who is going to do what, when, by when, how and with whom?
- How will we facilitate communication and feedback?
- Where can the required resources be realistically sourced, including core management?
- Do all involved partners have a clear and common understanding?
- When and how will progress be monitored and planning be reviewed?

## Strategy and planning

A CEP's strategy will pull together its aim and focus, its resources and resourcefulness, and alignment with others' agendas, and identify what needs to be done.

Strategy-development questions for CEPs:

- How can we shape a collective impact strategy, to which partners contribute what they can in a coherent way, coalescing around our common aim and focus?

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## Documenting and communicating needs analysis and CEP focus

It is important that each Cultural Education Partnership keep a communicable record describing how they have undertaken their needs analysis and how they have reached decisions. This is useful particularly for:

- **Business plans:** Ensuring that CEP business plans include the needs analysis early in the document, to clearly explain the rationale on which subsequent action planning is based.
- **External communication:** Having an account of the needs analysis and decision-making methodology, with its findings, that is easily digestible by external audiences.
- **Future needs analysis:** Permitting the CEP to build effectively on previous data and research when it is updated and renewed.
- **New CEP partners:** To understand the process the CEP has been through.
- **CEP clarity and decision-making:** The CEP needs to be clear on its needs and focus to guide its development, build its identity, and minimise distraction from appealing opportunities that arise but which might not be well-suited.

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### 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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