



By All, For All: The Power of Partnership

AHRC Creative Communities
Deep Dive Report 2023



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New report highlights the power of partnership

A new report published today - [By All, For All: The Power of Partnership](#) - has mapped for the first time a decade of AHRC (Arts and Humanities Research Council) funded community and cross-sector collaborative research and development (R&D) projects.

Written by Northumbria University academics, the report demonstrates how funders, including UK Government, can more effectively engage non-academic cross-sector partners and communities as researchers, especially those who are affected by geographic, economic and social inequalities.

This first 'deep dive' report has been delivered as part of the 'Creative Communities' programme, a three-year programme which is funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council UK (AHRC) and delivered by researchers at Northumbria University.

The report makes policy recommendations for a move away from funding models that encourage a competitive approach, with all individual parties counter bidding against each other, towards a model that encourages and rewards R&D that collaborates across-sectors and working with communities.

The recommendations outline models of best practice in co-creation culture across the UK that meet the Levelling Up missions including in key areas such as skills, wellbeing, the environment, civic identity and pride in place.

Recommendations include:

- Bringing together diverse partners with the shared aim of generating economic and social value through new cultural activity.
- Engaging cross-sector partners and communities in R&D to enhance the quality and resilience, reach and sustainability of research innovation. The reports maps 1,600 non-academic partners that have engaged in AHRC Creative Communities R&D across all four nations of the UK and all regions of England across the last decade.
- An effective delivery mechanism that strengthens business models, fosters innovation and connectivity, develops skills and retains talent, grows diversity in the workforce, improves wellbeing and environmental impacts, and unlocks inward investments and pride in place.
- The need for all sectors to prioritise community engagement and partnerships to create a rich, diverse and flexible research ecosystem, that can drive economic growth and respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the UK today.
- A shift in funding policy away from competition towards cross-sector collaboration, for the generation of better data and evidence capture and sharing on the multiple 'values' culture brings to the economy and society, and for the creation of new routes into research for non-academic collaborators to create a

research culture that is by all, and for all.

The Creative Communities programme mission is to make sure that talented people, regardless of their sector or location, means or background, are at the forefront of inspiring R&D, helping to create a stronger, fairer economy and society across the regions and nations of the UK.

Creative Communities Programme Director, Professor Katy Shaw said: “The Creative Community model directly addresses the UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) strategic aim to work as a funder across an expanded research ecosystem, with communities as researchers rather than just the subjects of research.

“Our report profiles for the first time the social, economic and political value of cross-sector AHRC R&D involving communities as partners and identifies new opportunities for growth in key challenge areas including skills, wellbeing, environment and pride in place.

“Our UK regions and nations are uniquely placed to leverage new R&D partnerships and the true potential of our people and places. We are delighted that AHRC has chosen to invest in this research and Northumbria University to lead the programme.”

Looking ahead, phase two of the programme will produce the first ever cross-sector partners survey, gathering insight on the experiences of those who have previously participated in AHRC-funded community research, and uncover opportunities to welcome new partners into future AHRC research collaborations.

This will inform a UK-wide series of Policy Labs, where key partners and experts from research organisations, third and private sector partners and communities will be invited to discuss and shape policy decision making at local and national levels for future AHRC investment.

Professor Christopher Smith, Executive Chair, Arts and Humanities Research Council said: “AHRC is committed to developing the best evidence base to support policy and joined up strategic thinking in the creative economy. We know that this R&D intensive sector touches everyone, through media and performance, through innovation and adoption of technology, through

regional growth and community regeneration.

“We have supported a number of projects and centres and created many collaborations with governmental and non-governmental organisations. But there has always been a risk that the size and diversity of the sector, and the multiplicity of funders, will dilute the power of the story we need to tell.

“This project turns a corner for our investment in the creative economy, championing the role of communities themselves, and making clear recommendations for improved coherence in our funding.”

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