

Governance and consortium working: A report of extracts and wider learning

**A research project by
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CPP Governance and Consortium Working: A report of extracts and wider learning

Commissioned in 2015 for the Creative People and Places programme this research on Governance and Consortium Working revealed the structures, relationships and commitments embedded within CPP consortia as valuable local assets.

This document extracts the broader lessons learned that will be relevant to consortia and local partnership working in the arts in general. We hope this will promote a practice of self-reflection and stimulate new thinking about partnership approaches.

This document contains the following extracts:

1. A typology of different consortium models within arts and other comparative sectors
2. A checklist for effective consortium governance
3. A self-reflection exercise for the consortium

See the full report here: <http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/governance-and-consortium-working>

1. Consortium models and options

For the organisations that come together as a consortium to deliver the bulk of consortium activity, our analysis of relevant literature suggests that there are four main consortia delivery models, each with strengths and weaknesses

Model	Main features	Pros	Cons	Best when
New legal body	A new entity set up to deliver a specific contract or project (also known as a 'single purpose vehicle')	Jointly owned by all partners – so no power imbalance Risk is ring-fenced so individual organisations are protected	New entity with no accounts or financial history may not be attractive to funders Time-consuming and complex to establish	Partners are thinking of working together over the long term, potentially beyond CPP
Lead body plus joint working agreement	One organisation has sole accountability to the funder and reports on finances and delivery Decision-making and delivery managed jointly through steering group and consortium working agreement	Allows close involvement of all members in management and operation of consortium	Members have greater exposure to risk associated with negligence or failure to deliver by other members Joint decision-making can be slow and require extensive negotiation across the group	There is a high degree of trust between partners and some commonality in terms of philosophy, values and culture
Lead body plus subcontracting	One organisation has sole accountability to the funder and reports on finances and delivery Delivery managed through overarching terms and separate contracts between lead body and each member	Clear leadership and responsibilities; swift decision-making Small organisations can take responsibility for a delivery strand without having to commit time to consortium management	Contribution of views of individual organisations to the whole is limited Lead body needs capacity and capability to manage multiple contracts	Partners feel most comfortable working within clear contractual terms Consortium has between two and four members
External body or prime contracting	A non-delivering partner (or 'prime contractor') takes responsibility for the management of the contract, and coordinates the required activities and services as a 'supply chain'. No single ownership of project within group of delivering organisations	Delivery partners free to concentrate on their area of expertise rather than subcontracting Lead body can play a useful role in capacity-building within the consortium and negotiating with funders	Lead body typically needs to be knowledgeable, respected and well-resourced, with a track record of contract management Grant may need to cover costs of non-delivering organisation taking on the contract management role	There is an obvious local infrastructure organisation to take on the non-delivering lead

2. Checklist of effective consortium governance

Our discussions with CPP places have highlighted ten key milestones that a consortium needs to achieve to establish effective governance arrangements (this applies to CPP and other consortia in the arts and cultural sector):

- ✓ Project governing board established to drive start-up phase
- ✓ Pre-start-up research and development to align partnerships, cohere agendas and agree the preferred model
- ✓ Business planning includes elements of programming and production – to test ideas and build relationships
- ✓ Agreed terms of reference with key partners such as local authorities and the Arts Council – to give clarity on their involvement from an early stage
- ✓ Skills audit of consortium members to identify strengths and undertake gap analysis. This might inform training requirements plus help to shape recruitment requirements
- ✓ Terms of reference agreed regarding specific roles and responsibilities and share of risk and reward – including access to funding and the alignment of consortium and institutional aims and objectives
- ✓ Clear lines of communication established within consortium and to a second tier of partners – to design-in an open and accessible approach to decision-making
- ✓ Development of a bespoke consortium tool-kit for each delivery area – including governance structure, financial model, communications and approach to managing and recording meetings
- ✓ Long-term development plan defined in Year 1 – to stretch the strategic horizons of the consortium and shape thinking on coordinated approaches beyond specific funding agreements
- ✓ Evaluation and review built-in and addressed as an agenda item at every consortium meeting – to 'put on the table' options for changing the model, the participants, or the strategic direction.

3. Consortium self-reflection exercise

We also suggest a set of questions that consortia could ask themselves as part of a self-reflective exercise every 6-12 months to check on the effectiveness of their overall collaboration (with material adapted from IDEa (2009) and Audit Scotland (2011)):

A. Behaviours

As consortium members, do we agree and communicate a shared vision?

Are we clear about what each partner brings to the table?

Are we open to challenge and able to change our outlook and approach?

Are our meetings focused and productive; less on process and more on substance?

Do we spend more time bemoaning barriers than finding solutions?

B. Processes

Is our business plan fit-for-purpose, and is it a document that we all believe in and are committed to?

Are the roles and responsibilities of each partner agreed and understood?

Do we have the right skills around the table to achieve the agreed tasks?

Do we have clear decision-making processes – and do we stick to them?

Are our decisions transparent to a wider public?

Are local communities able to have meaningful influence over our plans and decisions?

C. Resources

Are we effectively monitoring the costs of partnership working?

Are we achieving clear shared efficiencies by working together?

Do we share expertise and information on resources and trends?

Is consortium working rewarding for us as individual members and for our wider teams?

D. Outcomes

As a consortium, do we agree about what success looks like?

Do we have an effective system for managing performance and evaluating outcomes?

Do we fully understand and prioritise the needs of local communities – and is our project responding to those needs?

Do partners effectively balance personal, organisational and consortium objectives?

Are we achieving outcomes together that we couldn't achieve alone?

Selected References

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