ACTION RESEARCH
REFLECTIONS
2015 – 2018

Discussion Document

LONDON CULTURAL EDUCATION CHALLENGE

Three Years

Ten Challenge Partners

One London Cultural Education Challenge

A Generational Commitment

ALCHEMY
research & consultancy

2018
JUN

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Executive Summary

Article 31: States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity. **UN Convention on the rights of the child**

Challenge is a story of hope, tenacity and commitment. It is also the story of A New Direction (AND) moving into the role of investor as well as partner. Most of all it is a story of connections; embedding existing relationships, creating new ones, building dialogues and moving beyond existing networks to create pathways across sectors.

Through Challenge, AND has created a programme that put children and young people at the heart of conceiving, developing and delivering aspects of cultural education in London. It has involved a significant number of organisations and young people in the debate around what quality and equitable cultural education looks like.

Although the rights of the child to culture is enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and recent UK governments have declared support for cultural education, the background research to Challenge demonstrated significant issues in relation to the quality and equity of cultural education in London. If anything the view of the Lead Partners is that the situation has deteriorated since 2015.

This VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous) environment has meant that Challenge has had to be responsive to on-going contextual changes. This has influenced action during the programme and reinforced the need for moments of reflection and review.

Action research was included as part of the process and it was undertaken on the basis of three annual cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection. Each cycle was based on an inquiry question designed to feed into the overall programme question:

"How do we achieve a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?"

Cycle 1: "How can the Challenge participants (and other cultural education practitioners) be supported to achieve a step change in the delivery of cultural education in London?

Cycle 2: "How do we engage others in conversations about the needs and value of cultural education in London beyond the Challenge partners?"

Cycle 3: "What difference has Challenge made in terms of the delivery of Cultural Education in London?"

It was recognised from the outset that the ambition for Challenge was big, bold, and compelling, what might be described as a Big Hairy Audacious Goal (BHAG). No one was under any illusion about the scale of the undertaking. The success of Challenge has therefore been about what has been achieved in striving for the goal rather than reaching it.

Experiences of the programme suggest it was reasonable to define the future needs of cultural education as a 'wicked problem' and while this could have proved potentially counterproductive, a number of mechanisms were put in place to support Lead Partners in addressing this seemingly intractable problem.

During the programme a Theory of Change (ToC) evolved that provided added depth to what was meant by a step change and the intermediate outcomes it might involve. It was important to keep the ToC complexity sensitive, rather than be seen as a straight jacket. That said Lead Partner aims have remained consistent throughout the programme.

A collaborative action framework was created after year one that included five elements: create, connect, commit, collaborate and change. This has remained valid as Challenge was implemented with different elements having a different emphasis dependent on the nature of project delivery and maturity.

The infographics that outlined the six themes have proved a very important part of the programme and served as a key visual

communication tool as well as being cultural artefacts. The new Challenge London infographics illustrate how the themes have moved on and are likely to work for an even wider audience. Challenge has been on a journey of four phases from description to activism.

Several themes have arisen during the programme:

- Learning: its different forms, how it can be orientated and how it might be shared

- Cross Sector Social Partnerships (CSSPs): the importance of CSSPs and ensuring they are complexity sensitive

- Prototyping policy: Challenge has adopted a prototyping approach allowing flexibility and adaptation

- Networks: network structures configured in different ways to allow additional flexibility

What worked well?

- Young people at the heart

- The extent of the connections generated

- A diverse group of Lead Partners and projects

- Cultural Education networks extended

- On-going learning and the development of resources

- Overall programme flexibility

What might have been done differently?

- Alternative mechanisms for delivering Challenge have been considered, and most suggest that the approach adopted was appropriate given the programme purpose

- Early engagement of senior leaders – recognising efforts were made to try and gain their support

- Earlier set up of online/shared resources

- Innovation workshops pre-application to help stretch project ideas and ambition

- Potential for role conflict with AND as investor and deliverer could have been explored earlier

- More use of digital activism

- Connecting evaluation strands across the projects and programme more clearly

Implications:

- A robust and varied evidence base is important

- Having a big hairy audacious goal is motivating

- Flexibility at all levels is crucial

- It takes cross sector and collective effort and a lot of dialogue

- Being open to different voices and value sets means checking assumptions

- Prototyping, quick fails and redesign gives flexibility

- Relationship building is long term and unpredictable

- Expect change!

- There is a need to balance a range of tensions:

  - Holding vision vs allowing flexibility and supporting projects to change

  - Staying true to your values vs accommodating different value sets

  - Linear planning vs non-linear change

  - Working in familiar ways vs moving outside of comfort zones

- **O** Maintaining control vs allowing autonomy

- **O** Public accountability vs risk taking

Recommendations:

AND

- Sharing the story: Continue to spread the stories generated by Challenge, exploring different channels and audiences. There is enough content to tell the story in different ways focusing on different aspects of the experience. Explore the potential for more digital activism

- Developing a story map: Consider developing an interactive story map where you might be able to scroll over images that give different perspectives and voices

- Development of the interactive map and partners: Continue developing the interactive map, adding partners as the work continues

- Sharing lessons with other funders: Share experiences with other funding bodies of how Challenge has adapted and provided flexibility, and balancing the roles of investor, partner, facilitator and initiator

- Continue building the resource base: It is likely resources will continue to emerge from the programme so it would be good if the resource base could keep developing

- Providing more opportunities for connections: Keep providing opportunities which might result in serendipitous developments

- Continuing to extend partnership base across the three sectors: Continue supporting connections across sectors and helping the cultural sector create meaningful dialogue

- Maintaining an on-going relationship with Lead Partners: Where feasible maintain connections to keep monitoring impact of the work to date

- Acknowledge secondary partners: Where possible contact all secondary partners to acknowledge their contributions and keep building a distributed network

Lead Partners

- Sharing the story: Continue to spread the stories generated by your project/programme, exploring different channels and audiences.

- Visual stories: Explore/continue use of infographics and other visualisations for your own projects

- Resources: Continue to build your own resource base and link to AND

- Mapping the progress of young people: Where possible keep a connection with the young people that have benefited through Challenge and monitor their progress

- Staying connected to AND: Maintain an on-going relationship with AND where feasible to continue sharing the development of your work beyond Challenge

Picture 1. Culture Makers logo

Picture 2. Culture Makers promotional postcard

The backstory – Cultural Education Challenge

It's a really shifting landscape physically and culturally, so we're trying to embed a culture of collaboration that goes beyond just a couple of well-meaning individuals. To try and enable it to keep going.
(Lead Partner)

If you don't have access, you are the object rather than the subject of culture.
(Fintan O'Toole)

Challenge is concerned with which children and young people are engaging in arts and culture in London and which are not, and the possible barriers that exist to accessing a fulfilling and life-enhancing cultural education.

AND opened up a space for debate and inquiry around the current and future issues facing cultural education and Challenge has been part of that process. At the core of Challenge is the desire to explore the extent to which engagement in art and culture throughout childhood contributes to the concept of 'cultural capital,' that is how engagement with cultural activity contributes to becoming a well-rounded individual, better able to access opportunities and navigate choices throughout life.

Amidst an ever-changing environment AND recognises that there are significant opportunities for the improvement of cultural education and these informed the development and delivery of Challenge over the last three years, such as:

- The predicted growth in the younger population in London

- The pupil premium and fears of it being diverted to plug school funding gaps

- Potential private sector partnerships

- New forms of enterprise, more of which are accessible to young people

- An evolving creative and cultural sector that is also having to respond to a changing context

- More scope for collaboration and partnerships as schools, communities and businesses recognise the value of cultural education in creating life skills, building desired attitudes and behaviours and developing a lifelong, lifewide engagement with learning

AND invested £900,000 over three years in expanding partnerships, generating new resources, exploring new opportunities, and delivering the programme. Challenge was conceived to explore how to create a step change in cultural education in London, and AND's background research suggested that the starting point for he programme was the need to explore six themes:

- Equity and Wealth

- Equity and Geography

- Influence and Diversity

- Entry to Employment

- New London and New Schools

- A Super-Served System

There were three Challenge aims:

1. Constructing sustainable, innovative partnerships for the delivery of cultural education across London

2. Providing better cultural education outcomes for young people (0-25yrs) in London

3. Generating new sources of funding to improve cultural education op-portunity

The cycle one action research reflections showed that Challenge had evolved into a programme that was active on three levels (Figure One). This continued into the second and third cycles of action research although the intermediate layer that was originally termed as a Community of Practice was more appropriately re-defined as cross-sector social-oriented partnerships (CSSPs). There was some discussion early on about whether the programme was engaged in social activism and this was clarified in year two and developed further in year three.

Figure 1. Cultural Education Challenge Programme levels

A programme of social change/justice

Cross-sectoral social partnerships

Grant funding programme

£
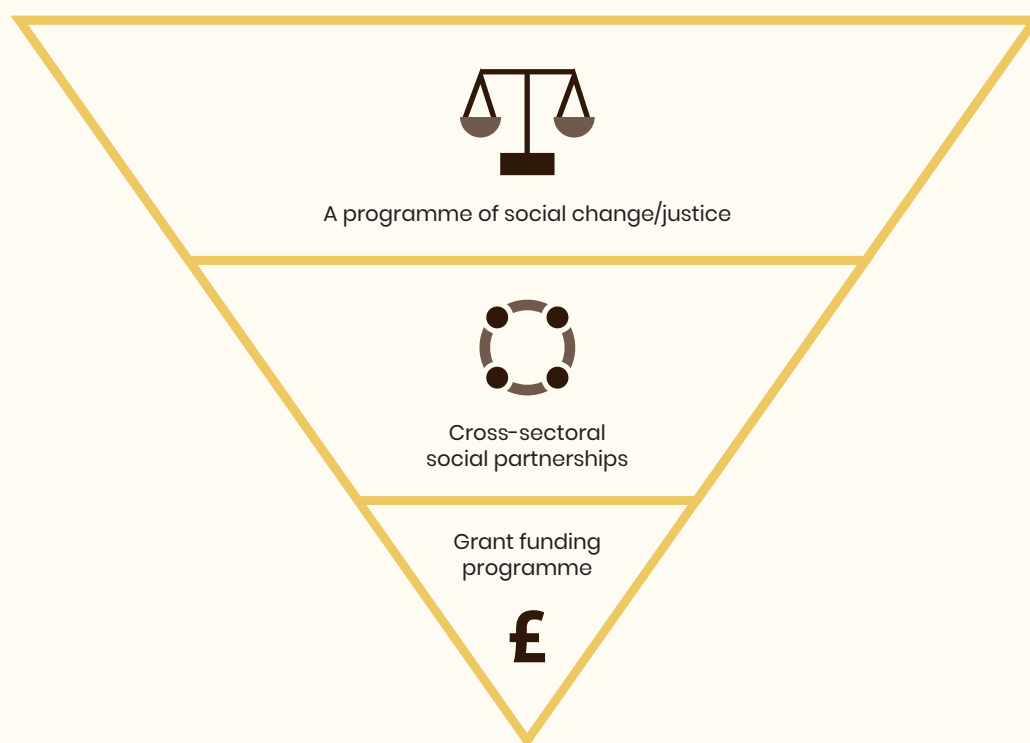
Feedback on the proposed model developed in Cycle One raised some useful insights; while some participants recognised the layers embedded in the programme for others the notion that it was rooted in some form of social activism was a new way of thinking about Challenge.

> Social justice feels very wide and very far away. Like the pyramid. We're a small part of a bigger picture.'
>
> **Lead Partner**

Comments suggested that the challenges facing cultural education were such big issues that the Lead Partners could only play a small part in effecting change. Concerns were also raised about the instrumental outweighing the intrinsic value of art and that framing Challenge as a social activism programme might exacerbate this.

In several projects: #Culture Makers, Creative Youth and Creative Croydon, the young people participating were involved in social issues that affected them and their communities directly. This reinforced the intention of Challenge to generate impact at a policy and societal level. Concerns about the nature, equity and delivery of cultural education in London as described by the UN General Comment No.17 have continued throughout Challenge. The operating contexts for schools, local authorities, funders, housing associations, the lead partners, corporate partners, AND, and young people are continually changing and in some cases have worsened over the period.

There has been increased recognition of the need to develop a robust evidence base for the value of culture education and a £2.5million partnership project between The Education Endowment Fund (EEF) and the Royal Society for the encouragement of the Arts, Manufactures and Science (RSA) was launched in 2017 to research the impact of arts and cultural education. In other words, the overall context and themes that triggered Challenge have remained relevant, if not intensified, throughout three years of action research.

Opportunities for cultural and artistic activities and the provision of specialist arts educators in school are, in some countries, being eroded in favour of more academic subjects.

Committee on the Rights of the Child, General comment No. 17 (2013)

An ever-changing context

...the solution that works for one part of VUCA likely won't work for the other three. Each dimension of VUCA is distinct and unique, and requires a different optimal course of action.
(Bennett & Lemoine, 2014)

£22million has been cut from Youth Services in London between 2011/12 and 2016/17

Challenge has been delivered in the context of a rapidly changing external environment; much of which could not have been predicted when the programme was first envisaged.

We have seen the election of a Conservative Government in 2015, a second woman Prime Minister, the Brexit vote, a second General Election, the Manchester and London Terrorist attacks, widespread child sexual abuse cases, the Grenfell tragedy, and the growth of movements like Black Lives Matter and Me Too. Not to mention the election of Donald Trump, the growth of Far-Right movements, waning diplomatic relationships with Russia, growing concerns about cybercrime and its implications for political processes, the Rohingya crisis, the ongoing conflict in Syria, and so on.

Equally, we have seen the first Down's Syndrome model at New York Fashion Week, England's first female bishop, the UK's greenest year for energy production (2017), advances in stem cell technology and the first woman was appointed as the Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police.

This environment has been characterised by a term coined in the late 1990's – VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous). It is in this environment that Challenge has been delivered and that the themes of the programme have become increasingly pressing for the next generations. The context for Challenge continued to play an important role in the programme's development and delivery and is considered here in two parts:

1. The action context: the position of the programme within the wider environment

2. The research context: consideration of the literature that provides a wider understanding of the issues. It locates aspects of the Challenge programme in relation to other research, policy and practice

The action context

Factors

- Changing demography creating new pressures on services

- Austerity budgeting continuing to bring a downward pressure on the public sector

- Structural shifts that are opening up new roles, powers and alliances

- The impact of Brexit on community cohesion

- Changing policy landscape for education

- Regeneration and development agendas for London

Trends

- Ongoing reductions in local authority spending - LGA predicts that spending cuts will amount to a 27% (or £7.4bn) real terms cut to local authorities across the country from 2010/11 – 2019/20

- Shifting priorities for local authorities - London councils estimate that 60% of local authority funding will go on waste and adult social care by 2020

- 23% of schools that have dropped subjects because of the EBacc have cut drama and the performing arts

- 42% of London's largest property development schemes due to complete have a focus on culture

- Two in five schools do not believe that pupils' families involve their children in a wide range of cultural activities

- 40% of young people from wealthier social grades visit museums and galleries in their free time, compared to 27% from less well-off ones

- £22million has been cut from Youth Services since 2011, closing 30 youth centres with at least 12,700 youth service places being lost

- Caring for Cultural Freedom (AND/KCL) report highlights the importance of safe spaces and partnership working

- London is far behind other regions in England in terms of take-up of state-funded early years provision, particularly amongst disadvantaged 2 year-olds

- London school leaders are more likely than leaders elsewhere to report that their schools face a shortage of teachers (56 per cent compared to 37 per cent overall)

Source: AND unless otherwise stated

Implications of context

The resulting operating environment is now characterised by:

1. Public funding that is unlikely to return to pre-2008 levels for some years, if ever, and a general rolling back of state provision

2. Cultural organisations having to span the generations from Traditionalists to Linksters (Johnson & Johnson, 2010) both as staff and beneficiaries. This requires new approaches to equality and inclusivity in particular

3. Creative practice is adapting and traditional artform boundaries are blurring and morphing, one example being the notion of 'post-photography'

4. Changing work patterns and expectations, particularly from Millennials and Linksters are emerging, benefiting some and disadvantaging others as employment becomes more flexible but less secure

5. Hyper connectivity and 'curated' lives

6. The 'Experience Economy' as a driver of customer behaviour and purchasing

7. Fast moving technology that is impacting how we think and behave
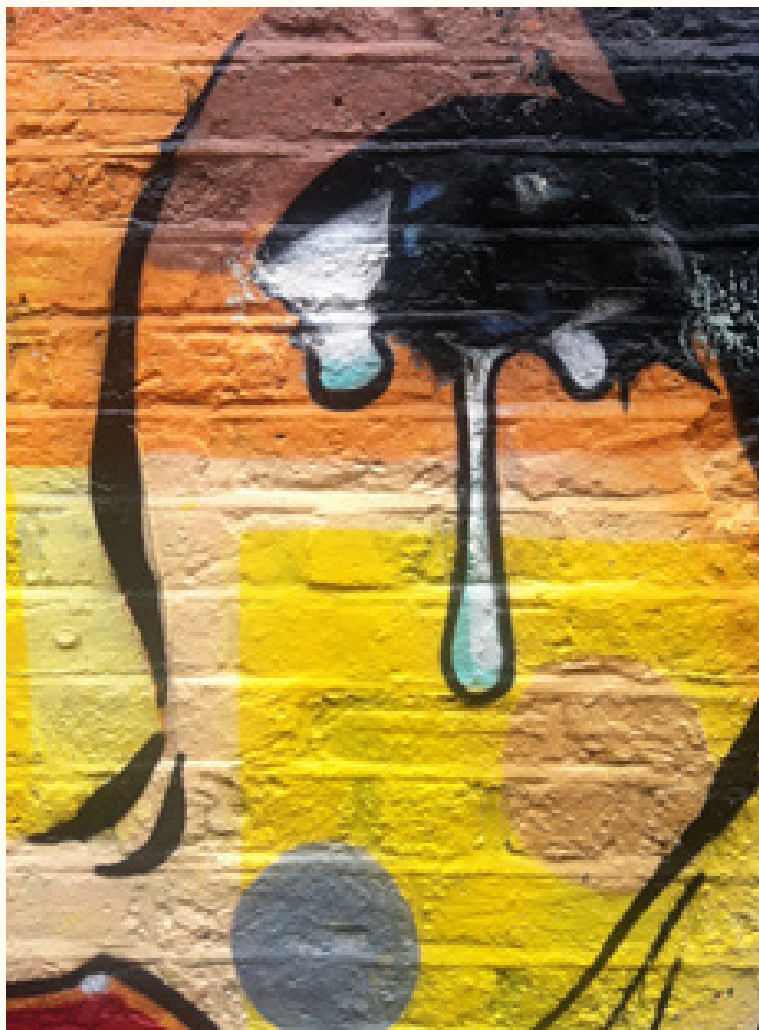
Picture 3. Graffiti near a Lead Partner's office (Alchemy)

The research context

Across the three years several areas of research (Appendix One) surfaced related to issues raised by the experiences of AND and the Lead Partners (See Challenge Discussion Papers One to Three). These have ranged from youth activism to cross-sectoral socially orientated partnerships (CSSPs), and from hope to humour in organisations. Challenge has proved very fertile ground for suggesting different research options that AND could explore as a result of the programme.

As part of the programme a paper on the role of the infographics was presented to the Annual Ethnography Symposium in 2017, and there is significant scope for further papers and articles to be developed. Challenge has the potential to contribute to a range of fields, including:

- Youth studies

- CSSPs

- Collaboration and inter-organisational working

- Social activism

- Prototyping policy

- Wicked problems

- Cultural education

- Programme evaluation

Picture 4. Creative Croydon partnership model

Stakeholders:

Croydon Communities

Cultural Education Hub Working Group:

Local Authority

Lawrence Becko*

Graeme Smith*

Young People in Croydon

Further Funders

School/Other Education Settings

Young Ambassadors

Celia Newell*

Izzy Bianchini*

Jessica Hodge*

Regeneration Partners

Arts Organisations

*Graeme Smith, Head of Croydon Music and Arts. Providing strategic and financial management

*Celia Newell, Development Officer, Fairfield Halls. Building relationships with corporate partners

*Izzy Bianchini, Development Manager, Croydon Music and Arts. Building relationships with schools and managing Arts Awards/Children's University

*Jessica Hodge, Youth Arts Manager, Croydon Council. Building relationships with hard-to-reach communities

*Lawrence Becko, Independent Consultant. Providing strategic and practical guidance throughout the process

Picture 5. Challenge launch conference

Learning and improvement through action research

Action research explicitly and purposefully becomes part of the change process by engaging the people in the program or organization in studying their own problems in order to solve those problems **(Whyte, 1989)**

Including an action research approach as part of Challenge maintained a focus on the core issues the programme wanted to address as they unfolded in practice. These were developed in collaboration with AND and the Lead Partners (Appendix Two gives further background).

The action research process has not concerned itself with the overall effectiveness of the programme, this has been done through other evaluative processes undertaken by AND. It has been concerned with how the initial planning has transferred to action and how that action was continually improved.

The action research process has several characteristics:

1. The primary purpose of action research is the development of practical knowing and collective learning

2. It is founded on a collaborative philosophy – research is done 'with' not 'to' those involved

3. It is rooted in in-depth and critical experience

4. It takes into account different forms of knowing – experiential, practical, presentational, and propositional

5. It aims to develop theory out of action and practical experience

Action research generally takes the form of cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection (Figure Two). There are generally at least three cycles, each building on the last with the aim of continuous improvement. Each of these cycles becomes a discrete experiment (or, in the case of programmes, a series of experiments), using an action-oriented process as a way of studying change. In discussion with the AND team and the Challenge Group an overarching question for the action research element of Challenge was agreed.

> How do we achieve a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?

We also defined three sub questions that were designed to support answering the overarching question and taking action. Each question was aligned to the three financial years of Challenge finishing in March 2018. Following each cycle the original sub question was revisited and slightly revised to reflect the learning to date.

Cycle 1

"How can the Challenge participants (and other cultural education practitioners) be supported to achieve a step change?"

Cycle 2

"How do we engage others in conversations about the needs and value of cultural education in London beyond the Challenge partners?"

Cycle 3

"What difference has Challenge made in terms of the delivery of Cultural Education in London?"

Figure 2. A summary of the Challenge Action Research approach

How do we achieve a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?

Cycle 3
What difference have we made to cultural education in London?

Cycle 2
How do we engage others in the conversations?

Cycle 1
How do we support Lead Partners?

Plan · Act · Reflect · Observe
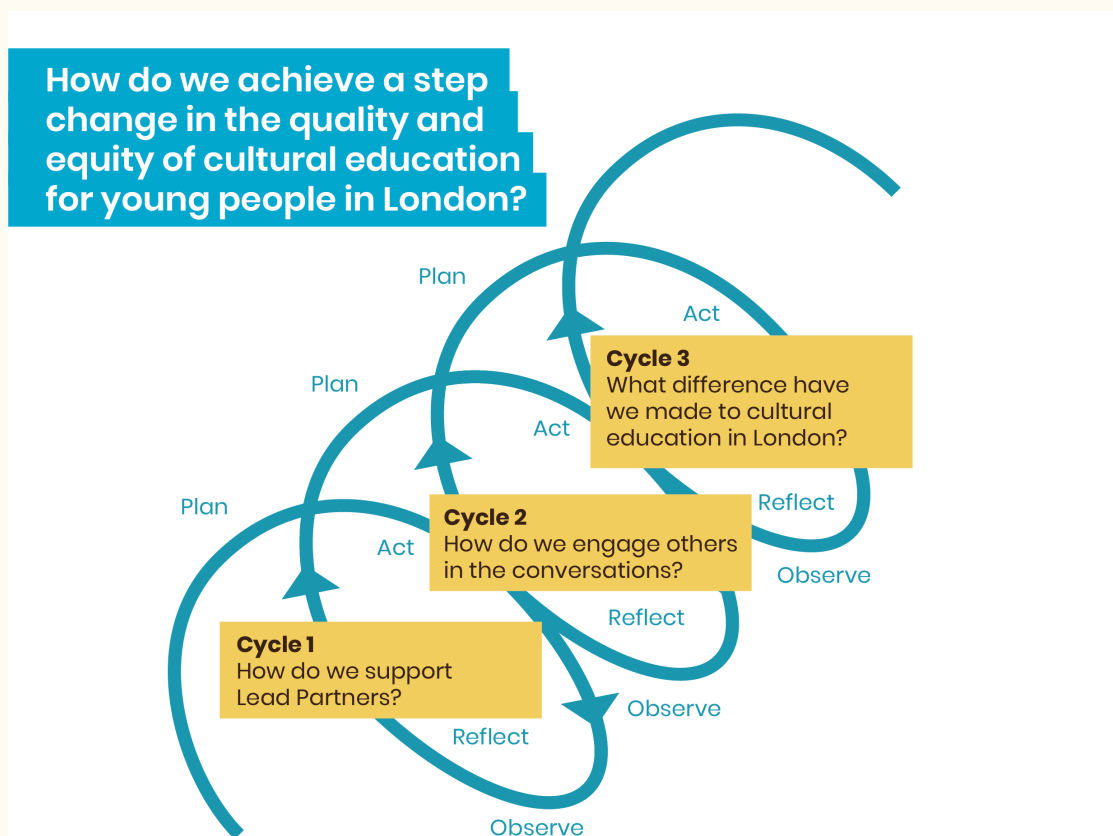
The action research data collection included the action researcher attending the ongoing Challenge Partner and Challenge Group meetings, regular updates with the AND team, and a series of interviews with Lead Partners and some of the wider partners. This has allowed for collection of experience in practice.

Data collection has also included:

- Documentary evidence: field notes, project and programme documentation, social media and so on

- A wider literature review, based on themes that have surfaced during the process

- Review of social media usage and patterns

People underestimate their capacity for change. There is never a right time to do a difficult thing.
(John Porter)

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.
(**Margaret Mead**)

Change happens when it wants to, not always when we'd like it.
(**Speaker, London Cultural Education Challenge Conference 2015**)

Step Change

A true BHAG is clear and compelling and serves as a unifying focal point of effort and acts as a catalyst for team spirit. For example, the 1960s moon mission did not need a committee to spend endless hours wordsmithing a 'mission statement'. The goal itself was so easy to grasp, so compelling in its own right that it could be said one hundred different ways, yet be easily understood by everyone. Collins & Parras,1994

It was recognised from the outset that the ambition for Challenge was big and bold, what might be described as a 'Big Hairy Audacious Goal' (BHAG).

A BHAG is energising, easy to understand and provides a point of focus, an important factor when bringing together such a diverse range of projects, approaches and partners. Everyone was aware that creating a step change in cultural education in London was a big stretch and in reality was unlikely to be achieved in a three year period. Nonetheless, the Lead Partners were happy to get behind it and accept the Challenge; had the ambition been anything less it is possible that the programme would not have achieved the results it did. The success of Challenge has been more about striving for the goal than achieving it.

Over the three years there has been a lot of reflection on what a step change meant in practice and how it might be achieved.

On looking back over the programme, it is apparent that it was the six themes that framed what a step change might mean. They put the flesh on the ambition and programme purpose based on:

- Cultural engagement being available and attractive to all young people regardless of economic background

- Cultural resources being available to all young Londoners regardless of their geographic location, making sure cultural offerings are based on where young people live

- Children and young people being better able to influence the cultural offer provided by arts and cultural organisations

- Young Londoners attracted into creative careers, which in turn supports greater diversity within London's creative and cultural sectors

- Cultural education being woven into future regeneration and planning agendas to ensure it is a fundamental part of London's growth and development

- All schools in London having an opportunity to work with cultural organisations (not just those who are already well connected) and those opportunities being based on mutual understanding and dialogue

Picture 6. Ovalhouse Creative Youth (Ovalhouse)

Cultural Education: A wicked problem?

> Trial and error is a relatively effective way to make strategic decisions in settings so ambiguous, novel, or complex that any cognitively intensive effort is doomed to fail. In altogether new situations . . . . there may be no good substitute for trying something out and learning from experience.
> **(Giovanni & Jan W Rivkin, 2005)**

Followed to its logical conclusion, the intractability of wicked problems... could be taken to mean that grappling with them is a futile endeavour. After all, if they are virtually impossible to comprehend and any solution simply throws up more problems, then why bother? (Head & Alford, 2015: 732)

In reflecting back over the last three years of Challenge one of the questions to be asked is 'were we right in defining the future of cultural education in London as a wicked problem?' (Rittel & Webber, 1973)

It was initially used as a concept to assist with programme design because it helped frame the characteristics that the programme and its projects needed to look at addressing.

Table 1. Implications for Challenge of defining cultural education as a wicked problem

Wicked problem characteristics	Programme implications
Many interdependencies and multi-causal	Understand the nature of the possible interdependencies and causes – through research, engaging multiple perspectives, working in different ways. Accept from the outset there is unlikely to be a single solution
No single solution	Include a wide variety of approaches for addressing the issues facing cultural education. Monitor the outputs and outcomes of different approaches. Allow for different perspectives. Be ambitious but realistic about what can be accomplished. Learn from experience
Multiple stakeholders and interest groups	Involve wide ranging partnerships that span non-profit, public and private sectors. Build new partnerships and understand who has an interest (or possible interest) in the issues. Engage with perspectives that challenge assumptions and come from a different values base
Complex – socially, generatively and dynamically	Expect the unexpected! Avoid 'predicting' outcomes. Ensure the programme is flexible and adaptable to be able to respond to project needs and outcomes as they are implemented. Support dynamic and innovative projects
No stopping rule	Need for on-going iteration and different approaches. Build in monitoring and reflection to understand the outcomes of different approaches. Build an evidence base from the work undertaken to create resources to support others working in the field. Be mindful of hard targets and fixed outcomes

Challenge worked to address these characteristics in a number of ways:

- Identifying the six programme themes and exploring their implications through the work of Lead Partners

- Supporting ten different multi-partner projects from across London

- Organising regular Lead Partner meetings and encouraging co-design of the agendas

- Tying Challenge into other AND initiatives and training opportunities

- Encouraging cross-fertilisation of Lead Partners and projects

- Responding flexibly to Lead Partner difficulties and needs

- Establishing the Challenge Groups to bring in external perspectives that might not otherwise be included in such initiatives

- Regular monitoring of project achievements and needs

- Longitudinal action research built into the programme

It was recognised at the outset that defining the issues of cultural education in this way could prove counter-productive in that participants might feel overwhelmed or even defeated before they began. In some cases this was not an issue because there may not have been a full understanding of what they were undertaking, and in others it seemed to provide the motivation to tackle the obstacles head on.

> Messes are complex, multi-dimensional, intractable, dynamic problems that can only be partially addressed and partially resolved.
> **(Ackoff, 1999)**

An early exercise was used to create mess maps (Appendix Three) that produced visualisations of some of the complexities of the different stakeholder groups. It also encouraged Lead Partners to step into the shoes of those stakeholders to try and gain some insight into their perspectives on cultural education. At the time this was quite a difficult exercise for some but Lead Partners are still recalling some of the insights gained from the discussions two years later.

The experiences of both the Lead Partners and AND throughout the programme suggest that it was reasonable to frame the needs of cultural education in London in terms of being a wicked problem and recognises the scale of the undertaking. In delivering Challenge there has therefore been a recognised need to allow for re-scoping projects, re-contracting and adapting as projects were set up and implemented.

Some tensions were created by the need to flex the programme but these manifest themselves more with secondary partners and other funders (often local authorities) who were making assumptions about what AND required in terms of delivery. A flexible and adaptable approach is a particular challenge for those institutions that are traditionally more rational, linear, and goal driven.

> The presence of collaborative relationships is likely to enhance the understanding and addressing of those wicked problems where there are multiple parties with differential knowledge, interests or values.
>
> **(Head & Alford, 2015: 725)**

A Theory of Change

Towards the end of year two as part of the reflection process a Theory of Change (ToC) had started to emerge (Appendix Four). This came out of the preceding action stages and started to surface how a step change could be enacted.

Figure 3. Challenge summary ToC

Intermediate outcome

Building awareness

Intermediate outcome

Developing cross-sectoral social partnerships

Intermediate outcome

Cultural education widely available

Impact

Young people are culturally engaged & active citizens
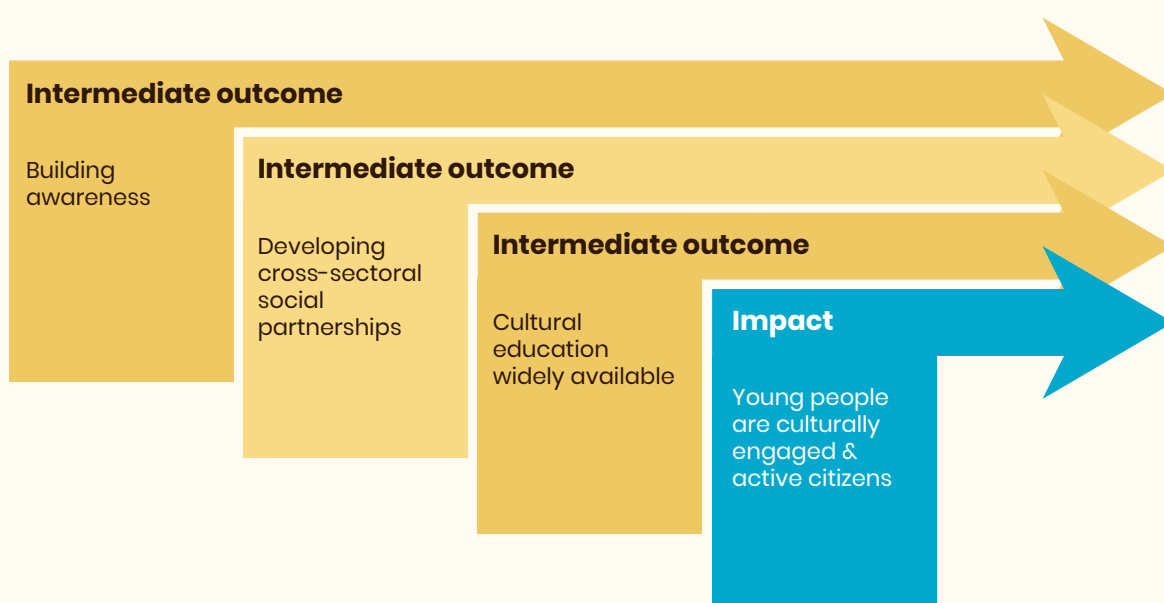
What started as a diagnostic change model resulting in the research that informed the initial themes moved into becoming a dialogic change model recognising that in order to come close to delivering on its ambition Challenge needed to engage as wide a network as possible.

Based on the current draft of the ToC the ultimate impact of Challenge was therefore to support young people in being culturally active and fully rounded individual citizens; a desire for both individual and societal impact. As a result of the ToC emerging out of action it shows how Challenge developed to problem solve the issues affecting cultural education in London.

Formulating an appropriate ToC helps to make sense of the possible steps that might be involved in terms of a programme moving towards a particular goal, the ToC development adds value as much in its formulation because of the dialogue it creates as in its final form. Recent research into ToCs and collaborative working (van Tulder & Keen, 2018) highlights the need for TOCs in this context to be complexity sensitive and suggests three key requirements:

1. It needs to support partnerships in understanding the level of complexity under which they are working

2. Appreciation of this complexity should in turn inform the configuration of the partnership/s

3. Partnerships should be supported in aligning an appropriate learning strategy that is more reflective and adaptive as a partnerships face higher levels of complexity

While ToCs are now in widespread use and are recognised as a valid tool there should be some caution in regarding it as a straightjacket, particularly in highly complex contexts such as those addressed by Challenge. It is an important tool for debating what change will look like and how partners might get there but it should not become overly restrictive otherwise there is a danger that the ToC is not 'aligned with the complexity of the problem.' (van Tulder & Keen, 2018)

Developing the ToC during the process of Challenge has allowed it to evolve out of practice akin to grounded theory. It also added further depth to the 'what do we mean by step change' question. It might be helpful if this developmental ToC approach could continue into the Challenge London process.

> The Dutch experience shows that a major challenge for publicly funded Cross Sector Partnerships has been the relatively limited tolerance for ambiguity of partnership strategies on the side of the funders. Funders often expect linear action plans and hold CSPs accountable for the realisation of intended outcomes rather than for fast learning and quick adaptation to new insights...
> **(Patton, 2002)**

> If the innovative potential of cross sector partnerships is stifled by defining detailed monitoring and evaluation ambitions and defining detailed goals during the initiation phase of complex cross sector partnerships, the willingness of potential participants to share dilemmas and build up mutual trust will decrease.
>
> **(van Tulder & Keen, 2018)**

we are
cyac
Croydon Youth Arts Collective

we believe

that arts and culture enrich young people's lives and are therefore vital for society and the citizens of Croydon.

we wish

to inspire positive changes to raise the profile of arts and culture in Croydon, by creating a dedicated group of young creatives who represent the diversity of Croydon.

we meet

in cultural spaces across the borough to share ideas, communicate and consult with a range of people and organisations about key issues which affect arts and culture.

we aim

to create accessible arts opportunities by and for young people; to develop young audiences for the arts in Croydon; to work with a range of groups and organisations in order to raise the profile of the arts in Croydon; and to ensure young people's voices are at the heart of decision-making.

Picture 7. Croydon Youth Arts Collective mission statement (CYAC)

The story of Challenge

...two and a half years after hearing this very poignant need that young people can't, literally can't travel, to certain parts of the Borough we're able to respond. So let those responses come organically, you can't rush them, you've just got to be really patient and flexible.
(Lead Partner)

... build in enough time to get everybody on message and work really hard with partners to see how we could agree on our commonality; so it was very clear even before application stage.
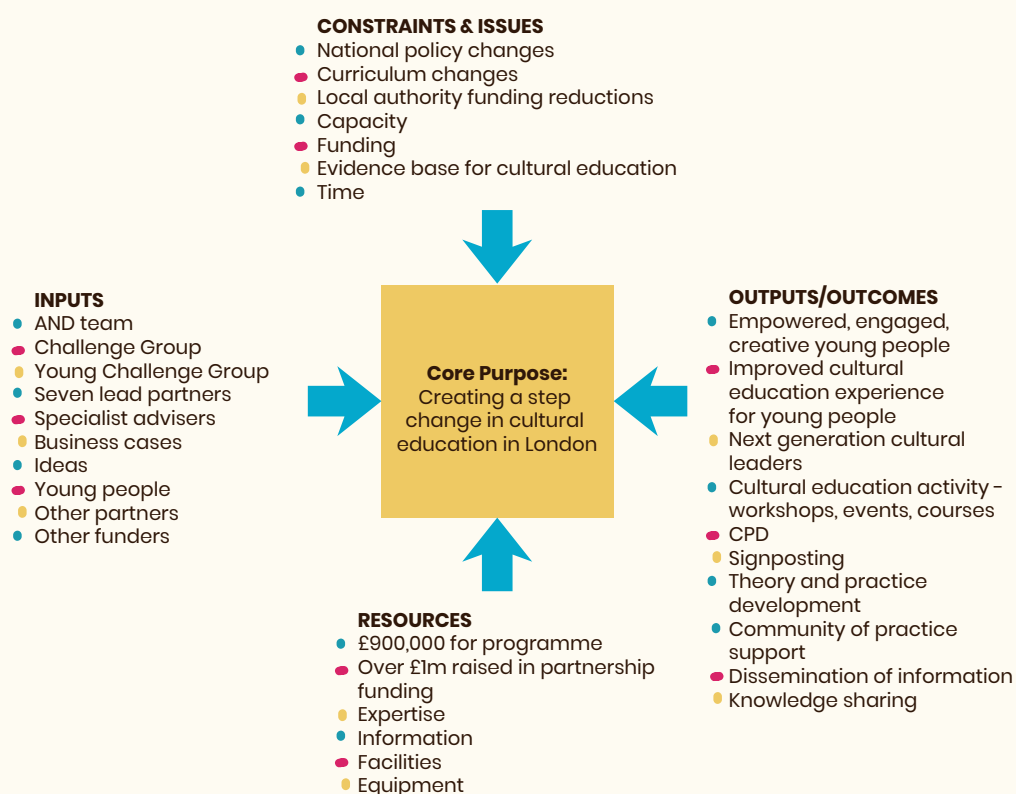**(Lead Partner)**

The Challenge Action Research

Three cycles of planning, action, observation and reflection.

Planning

As part of Challenge design we explored what processes, systems and structures would best serve the ambition of the programme. It was agreed that two external advisory groups (Challenge and Young Challenge) would be used to ensure different perspectives and expertise were brought into the programme (Appendix Five shows the delivery structure). Setting out the core purpose, inputs, constraints, resources and outputs/outcomes (Figure Four) gave a clear visualisation of the high level processes that would be needed to deliver the programme. These showed the breadth of the undertaking as well as what would be gained if Challenge delivered on its purpose.

Figure 4. Core process map for Challenge

CONSTRAINTS & ISSUES
- National policy changes
- Curriculum changes
- Local authority funding reductions
- Capacity
- Funding
- Evidence base for cultural education
- Time

INPUTS
- AND team
- Challenge Group
- Young Challenge Group
- Seven lead partners
- Specialist advisers
- Business cases
- Ideas
- Young people
- Other partners
- Other funders

Core Purpose:
Creating a step change in cultural education in London

OUTPUTS/OUTCOMES
- Empowered, engaged, creative young people
- Improved cultural education experience for young people
- Next generation cultural leaders
- Cultural education activity – workshops, events, courses
- CPD
- Signposting
- Theory and practice development
- Community of practice support
- Dissemination of information
- Knowledge sharing

RESOURCES
- £900,000 for programme
- Over £1m raised in partnership funding
- Expertise
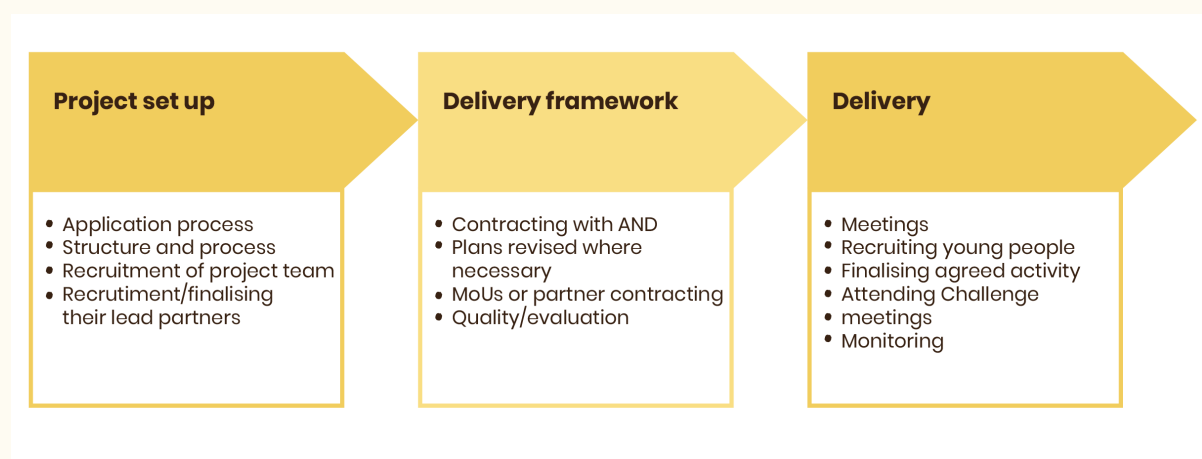- Information
- Facilities
- Equipment

Lead Partners and AND took their programmes and projects through a similar process of set up, launch and delivery. AND repeated the process during Challenge as a result of having a second cohort of Lead Partners. The programme was framed by the action research questions and the Lead Partner projects were also defined in terms of their inquiry questions (Appendix six).

Figure 5. Process phases – AND

Programme design & set up
- Structure and process
- Challenge Group & Young Challenge Group formed
- Purpose and aims agreed
- Consultations with the sector

Programme launch
- Conference
- Networking
- Stakeholder meetings
- PR & comms.
- Application process
- Selection

Delivery
- Lead Partner induction
- Contracting
- Projects refined & milestones revised
- Partner meetings

Figure 6. Process phases – Lead Partners

Project set up
- Application process
- Structure and process
- Recruitment of project team
- Recrutiment/finalising their lead partners

Delivery framework
- Contracting with AND
- Plans revised where necessary
- MoUs or partner contracting
- Quality/evaluation

Delivery
- Meetings
- Recruiting young people
- Finalising agreed activity
- Attending Challenge
- meetings
- Monitoring

In developing their business cases Lead Partners were required to clarify the purpose and aims of their projects (Figure Seven). Across both cohorts (with more of an emphasis on placemaking in the second cohort) the aims have remained consistent with young people at the core being pivotal.

This consistency has been in part supported by the programme criteria and themes, but has also been driven by local needs. Their emphasis and the means to deliver them have also been allowed to flex as they were implemented. The overlapping nature of many of the aims has also allowed additional scope for shared learning.

Figure 7. The collective lead partner aims

Social justice & equity

Valuing cultural education

Place-making

Young People

CPD - young people & cultural practitioners

Community Development

Collaborative working & networks

Action

Figure 8. The Challenge partnership action framework

CREATE

Processes
Agreements
Information
Infrastructure
Rules

CHANGE

Context
Organisational
Project

CONNECT

Leadership
Expertise
Resources

Trust
Relationships
Dialogue

Direction
Goals
Allegiances

COLLABORATE

COMMIT

In Year One a model (Figure Eight) was proposed for the elements of joint working that were emerging in terms of how the programme was unfolding. This has remained relevant throughout the three years with different elements having a different emphasis dependent on the priorities at the time. The model is deliberately shaped so that it can be read in a linear fashion allowing for clockwise progression from create to change, but also to acknowledge that each element touches on another so there can be different combinations of the elements dependent on project type and maturity.

Year One saw the main emphasis on creation, connecting and committing, and putting in place the building blocks for delivery. There were also some elements of change as Lead Partners had to adapt to the reality of establishing their programmes/projects.

In Year Two the emphasis for the Lead Partners moved to connecting, committing and collaborating. AND had a similar focus but was also concerned with the create element again as it looked forward to the next cohort of applications for round two.

Year Three saw all the elements in play as new Lead Partners set up and delivered their projects; AND looked forward to a possible new programme beyond 2018 and established Lead Partners started to reflect on the changes that their projects were making and their exit from the programme.

Observations

We are all collected around the table with a set of images in the middle, some are photographs and some are data visualisation (graphs etc.). In turn each of the Lead Partners either projects the images they have been asked to bring on the screen or handles the physical copies they have brought. We are transported into Council Chambers, schools, youth centres and communities. Each image is evocative, and you can see the concentrated listening happening in the room. Questions are asked, common issues are shared, and advice given, there is also a lot of laughter. Afterwards, I am told by several people that they felt this was the point where they really got to understand what some of the other Lead Partners were doing.
Action Researcher

Throughout the action research process we have explored the lived experience of Challenge participants. This awareness has been gained through observation, meeting with participants and annually discussing a set of aesthetically based questions.

Aesthetics give us access to the 'knowing of the senses.' (Strati, 2007) such as beauty, ugliness, comic and sad, which are part of our everyday language but are also evaluative. Beauty attracts and connects us, ugliness repels or offends and often needs confronting, the sad or tragic incites passions and the comic unites us and highlights what is ridiculous or humorous.

Beautiful

Beauty has been found mainly among the personal relationships that have been developed throughout Challenge. Lead Partners and AND have found it beautiful seeing young people grow and make progress, watching partnerships and individuals blossom and seeing the work come to fruition.

Several Lead Partners have talked of the beauty of a plan coming together and getting to the point where they have an approach that is scalable and/or replicable. Others have found it beautiful that they could help others develop their own agency, and start to build connections and networks beyond the projects.

Ugly

Ugliness has been associated with those things that have caused frustrations or difficulties. It has also been associated with both societal and relational factors. Throughout, AND and Lead partners have remarked on the ugliness of seeing young people and communities under duress and societal changes that seem to be making this worse rather than better.

Organisational politics and some partner relationships have also been described as ugly where they have created obstacles or have challenged the value set of projects. In some cases this has been to do with what might have been regarded as questionable motives on the part of some partners.

Organisational systems and processes have also been described as ugly where they have imposed frustrating constraints and been inflexible as projects have developed. They are also seen as an ugly consumer of time; ineffective and unnecessary meetings were particularly singled out as a source of ugliness.

Sad

Sadness has been caused by seeing the challenges young people face and the impact this has on their confidence, ambition and general well-being. This has been described as seeing the stubbornness of inequality, the deep-rooted nature of the issues and the narrow horizons available to some young people. It has perhaps been more disappointment than sadness but Lead Partners have also described the lack of awareness in some young people about potential careers in the creative and cultural sector.

Partners who have not honoured their commitments or delivered on promises have also caused sadness; this has been seen as not respecting the values inherent in the programme.

Finally, on a relational basis sadness has also been expressed in relation to projects ending and saying goodbye to some partners. Several Lead Partners described the importance of managing endings well particularly with young people.

Comic

There has been laughter and smiles in meetings, at events and throughout the delivery of Challenge. While it is sometimes harder for people to recall specific occasions there is a sense that people have shared laughter and amusement throughout. Activities and meetings with young people are generally described as having a fun element to them and some felt this was probably a pre-requisite for keeping the young people engaged. Some young people also either captured or used humour and laughter as a theme for the projects they undertook.

Humour has been described by participants in Challenge in several forms:

- As a collective defence strategy

- As 'gallows' humour when situations became exasperating, ugly or too sad to address directly

- As a bonding activity, particularly if it involved a colleague being subject to some form of public embarrassment by having to join in activities

- Ironic humour has been associated with colleagues outside of a project who have turned from cynics to evangelists, where their motives have been regarded as potentially self-centred

Picture 8. London Youth, Getting Ready Dance at Pineapple Studios (London Youth)
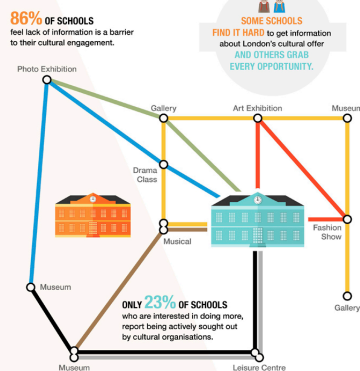
Seeing the story of Challenge

They [the infographics] are a great representation of what we stand for – what we care about. Two or three data points may change now but they have created a shared language.' **AND**

The term 'arts and culture' doesn't alienate me personally but I think for a lot of teenagers in London it would, and it's not really seen as a cool thing to do.
AND research participant, 18yrs

One in five Londoners under 19 say that theatres and arts centres are difficult to get to.
AND research for the launch of Challenge

Figure 9. Challenge launch infographics

A SUPER-SERVED SYSTEM

86% OF SCHOOLS feel lack of information is a barrier to their cultural engagement.

SOME SCHOOLS FIND IT HARD to get information about London's cultural offer AND OTHERS GRAB EVERY OPPORTUNITY.

Photo Exhibition
Gallery
Art Exhibition
Museum
Drama Class
Musical
Fashion Show
Museum
Gallery
Museum
Leisure Centre

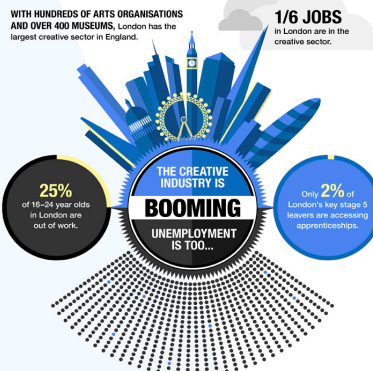ONLY **23%** OF SCHOOLS who are interested in doing more, report being actively sought out by cultural organisations.

WHY DO THE MAJORITY OF CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND SCHOOLS REPORT DIFFICULTIES IN WORKING WITH EACH OTHER?

How can we create more opportunities for school pupils to engage with cultural organisations?

How do we ensure all schools have an opportunity to work with cultural organisations, not just the best connected?

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

ENTRY TO EMPLOYMENT

WITH HUNDREDS OF ARTS ORGANISATIONS AND OVER 400 MUSEUMS, London has the largest creative sector in England.

1/6 JOBS in London are in the creative sector.

25% of 16–24 year olds in London are out of work.

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY IS **BOOMING** UNEMPLOYMENT IS TOO...

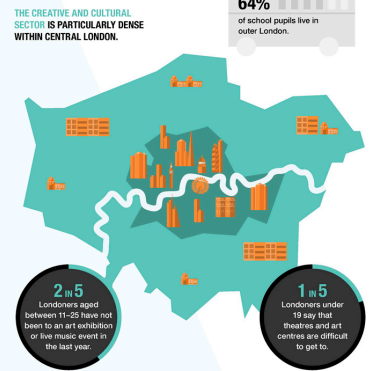Only **2%** of London's key stage 5 leavers are accessing apprenticeships.

HOW DO WE ATTRACT AND FACILITATE YOUNG LONDONERS INTO CREATIVE CAREERS?

Can we ensure all young people benefit from the growth and employment opportunity in creative and cultural industries?

Can we break down existing barriers to secure greater diversity within London's creative and cultural sectors?

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

EQUITY AND GEOGRAPHY

THE CREATIVE AND CULTURAL SECTOR IS PARTICULARLY DENSE WITHIN CENTRAL LONDON.

64% of school pupils live in outer London.

2 IN 5 Londoners aged between 11–25 have not been to an art exhibition or live music event in the last year.

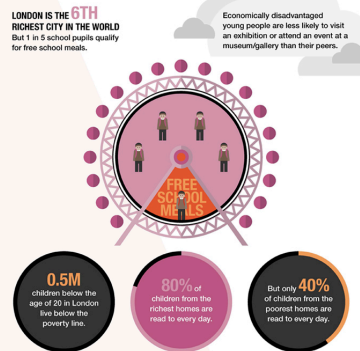**1 IN 5** Londoners under 19 say that theatres and art centres are difficult to get to.

HOW CAN WE ENSURE ACCESSIBILITY TO CULTURAL RESOURCES FOR ALL YOUNG LONDONERS?

Can we refocus London's cultural offerings based on where young people live?

Can we ensure that future cultural plans consider accessibility for all young people?

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

EQUITY AND WEALTH

LONDON IS THE **6TH** RICHEST CITY IN THE WORLD But 1 in 5 school pupils qualify for free school meals.

Economically disadvantaged young people are less likely to visit an exhibition or attend an event at a museum/gallery than their peers.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS

0.5M children below the age of 20 in London live below the poverty line.

80% of children from the richest homes are read to every day.

But only **40%** of children from the poorest homes are read to every day.

WHY IS CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT AMONG ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUTH DISPROPORTIONATELY LOW?

How can we support greater engagement in cultural activity for all young Londoners?

Can we ensure family income does not determine access to culture?

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

INFLUENCE AND DIVERSITY

WHAT IS **ARTS & CULTURE** TO YOUNG PEOPLE (AGED 13–19)?

"The term 'arts & culture' doesn't alienate me personally but I think for a lot of teenagers in London it would and it's not really seen as a cool thing to do." (18yrs)

The strongest spontaneous associations with **'ARTS'**
Visual arts (Painting and drawing)
Performing arts (Dance and music)

Arts & Culture

The strongest spontaneous associations with **'CULTURE'**
Food & drink (28%)
Religious events (21%)
Music (15%)
Fashion (14%)

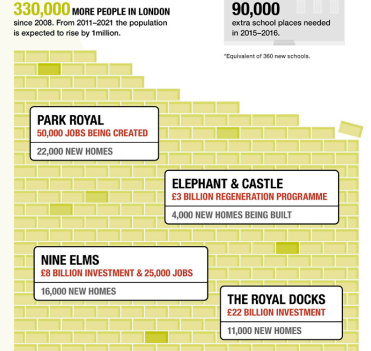CAN WE COMMUNICATE ARTS & CULTURE MORE EFFECTIVELY?

Can we ensure young people are better able to influence what arts and cultural organisations do?

Can we build cultural provision that children and young people want?

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

NEW LONDON AND NEW SCHOOLS

330,000 MORE PEOPLE IN LONDON since 2008. From 2011–2021 the population is expected to rise by 1million.

90,000 extra school places needed in 2015–2016.

*Equivalent of 360 new schools.

PARK ROYAL
50,000 JOBS BEING CREATED
22,000 NEW HOMES

ELEPHANT & CASTLE
£3 BILLION REGENERATION PROGRAMME
4,000 NEW HOMES BEING BUILT

NINE ELMS
£8 BILLION INVESTMENT & 25,000 JOBS
16,000 NEW HOMES

THE ROYAL DOCKS
£22 BILLION INVESTMENT
11,000 NEW HOMES

HOW DO WE ENSURE CULTURAL EDUCATION IS PART OF THE FOUNDATION FOR LONDON'S GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT?

Can we create new models of working which cement the provision of cultural education for all?

How can cultural education be permanently woven into future regeneration and planning agendas?

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

Figure 10. Bright Future infographic – end of year one
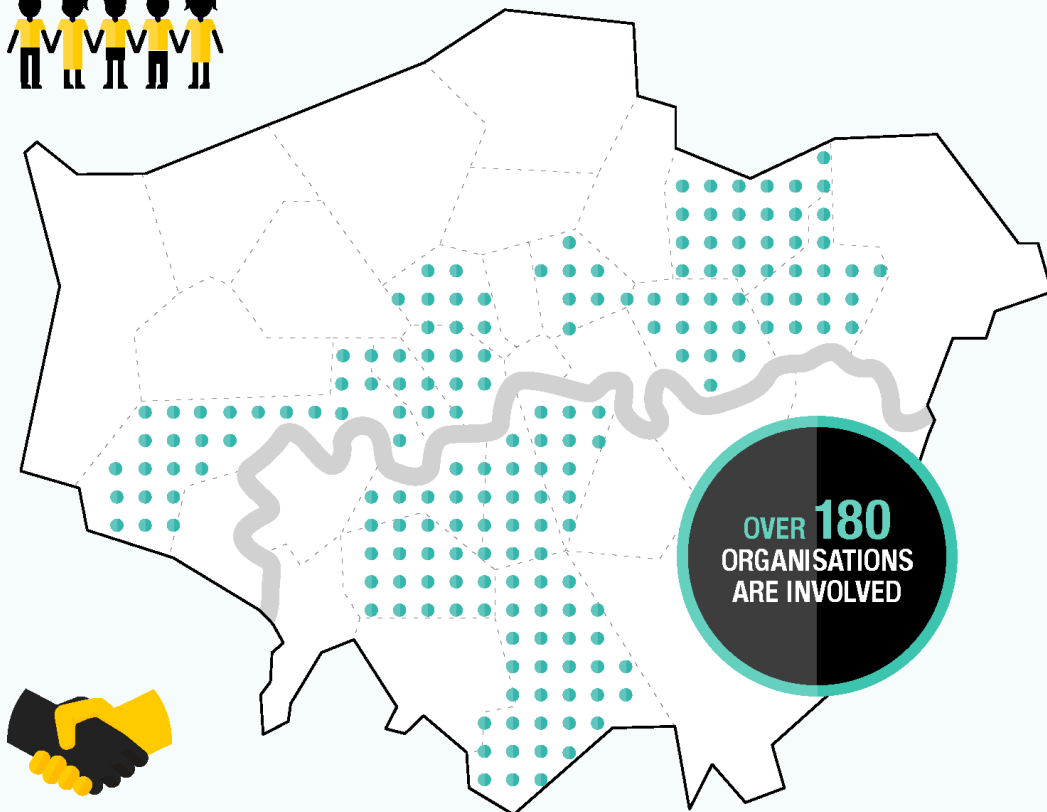

A BRIGHT FUTURE AHEAD

LONDON CULTURAL EDUCATION CHALLENGE

OVER 1500 YOUNG PEOPLE
have engaged in the Challenge programmes to date

Partners are working in
14 OF LONDON'S 33 BOROUGHS

OVER 180 ORGANISATIONS ARE INVOLVED

INVESTMENT PARTNERS INCLUDE

HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS SPORT ENGLAND
LOCAL AUTHORITIES **& SOCIAL ENTERPRISE** CULTURAL PARTNERS
TRUSTS FOUNDATIONS HOUSING DEVELOPER

WWW.ANEWDIRECTION.ORG.UK/CULTURAL-EDUCATION-CHALLENGE   #CULTURALEDCHALLENGE   A.N.D

The Challenge infographics and background research have provided a strong narrative thread for the programme from the initial conference through to programme application and shaping the business cases. Several lead partners have talked about their value in providing an evidence base that could be shared with others and help strengthen their case on a local level.
(Action Research Report Year one.)

Effective infographics are based on principles from the fields of psychology, usability, graphic design and statistics with the aim of reducing barriers (limited time, information overload) to understanding important information.
(Otten, Cheng, & Drewnowski, 2015)

Data visualisation (graphs, charts etc.) can be automatically generated and work with general data sets that are not context sensitive. Whereas, infographics help understanding of data at a glance and provide space for audiences to draw their own conclusions. Infographics may contain data visualisation but not vice versa. Considering the infographics as a core element of Challenge builds knowledge that spans a number of fields from ethnography to visual communications, and design practice to social activism.

Infographics can come in a number of forms; static (print or screen), animated (for screen use) or interactive (for screen use), and an infographic narrative can take several forms (Otten et al., 2015):

- Explanatory (educating of informing)

- Editorial (value judgements)

- Persuasive (influencing)

- Exploratory (testing different hypotheses)

The Challenge infographics were commissioned by AND and drew on its research, previous programmes and engagement with the cultural education sector in London. This has been an important factor in their acceptance and in confirming ANDs role as a sector leader and trusted source of information. Consumers of the infographics have evolved as their distribution has increased. Initially the audience was the cultural education sector itself, and specifically those organisations considering applying for funding. The Challenge partners then spread them within their own communities. The Infographics were also available to download from the AND website and have featured on social media.

The visual nature of the infographics appears to have played a part in their adoption and use as part of Challenge. In following the infographic posters and flyers as ethnographic things what emerged was their importance as cultural artefacts. They moved through and facilitated a widening process of sense making starting from within AND, moving to the Challenge partners and ultimately to a public audience. This consolidated the position of the infographics as ideological representations.

Developing a compelling infographic is not an easy process because of the need to balance complexity and simplicity. The Challenge infographics tackled very complex social, political and economic issues, which they managed to achieve in a way that resonated with the core audience of Challenge Partners.

Figure 11. Challenge London - the infographic for the new AND programme 2018–2022

A new set of infographics has now been developed for 'Challenge London,' the next iteration of the programme and these are noticeably looser, more illustrative and have a more playful tone while still addressing important issues. The themes are similar but are now expressed in a more informal and accessible form which gives them the potential to resonate with an even wider audience. They are another example of how AND is adapting its approach to the strategic work of creating a step change in cultural education in London.

The evolution of the infographics is a useful metaphor for the development of the programme itself, it now has a more confident and bold identity having taken the first tentative steps since 2015.

Programme Reflections

How do we articulate the 'fairy dust'?
Lead Partner

It's about a new dialogue and new types of dialogue. The collaboration was set up to make this happen.
Lead Partner

Challenge has been on a journey from description through to activism (Figure 12). Initially, the background research needed to demonstrate the need for Challenge and feed into programme design. This phase was mainly explanatory and descriptive in nature.

Figure 12. Mapping the journey of Challenge

2015

What is Challenge?

How do we share it?

PHASE 1

RESEARCH & DESIGN

Making sense of Challenge
Consolidating themes
Explanatory
Descriptive

FRAMING CHALLENGE

Programme design
Sharing the themes
Explanatory
Persuasion

PHASE 2

PHASE 3

CHALLENGE COMMUNITY

Sharing the themes
Gaining engagement
Exploratory
Shared ideology

CHALLENGE

MOVING TO ACTIVISM

Engaging beyond Challenge
Tightening focus
Ideological representation

PHASE 4

What is changing?

What next?

2018

#activism

Once the case was made and the programme designed AND needed some appropriate Lead Partners to apply and take up the Challenge. The work of this phase still needed to be explanatory but it also had to persuade others that this was something to engage with.

Phase three saw those who had been persuaded move into action and start to come together as a collective with a shared ideology and purpose. By Phase four the programme was extending its boundaries and engaging those beyond the immediate collective of Lead Partners. This required another level of explanation and the defining of ideological representations.

Looking back at the three activity cycles what thoughts come to mind?

Cycle 1

In cycle one much of the activity and reflection was based around what it meant to put young people at the heart of the work. Lead Partners were doing this in different ways and using a variety of approaches. To a certain degree at this stage the conversation was based on previous experience and was hypothetical in terms of how the projects would move into delivery. Some projects involved young people from the outset, for others this would come later.

This was also the period where our inquiry question focused on what support the Lead Partners might need to implement their projects. This was a time for testing out approaches, negotiating relationships and talking through what the challenges might be.

In some cases it was about starting to learn new forms of dialogue and language as AND and Lead Partners began working with partners from other sectors. It was a period when capacity and available time also became a preoccupation, particularly as some of the negotiations took longer than expected.

An overriding emotion was hope during cycle one as everyone felt some trepidation but also optimism about what might be achieved.

Cycle 2

This cycle was primarily about delivery as the set-up period came to an end and project approaches were finalised. AND was supporting and monitoring Lead Partners as well as thinking about the next round of applications, this involved some reflection on what had been achieved to date and any gaps in relation to the six themes that might be addressed by new Lead Partners/projects.

Work was also beginning on disseminating the story of Challenge and exploring how others might be engaged further in the issues it raised. Conversations at Lead Partner meetings revolved around learning the language of partners from other sectors and how best to make the case for cultural education.

Cycle 3

The first cohort Lead Partners were starting to see outputs and outcomes from their work and were beginning to think about what might be sustained beyond Challenge. AND was turning its attention towards a successor programme as well supporting Lead Partners through the final stages of their projects.

The Challenge partners meetings allowed Lead Partners to continue a collective dialogue about challenges and opportunities, surprises and accomplishments. This reinforced connections within the group and helped Lead Partners feel they were not alone in dealing with some of the issues that were coming up. The end of cycle three allowed for a sharing of pride and a wider sense of group of achievement as well as sharing different approaches to continuing the work to date.

What have we learnt from Challenge's ambition to create a step change in cultural education in London?

The desire to understand the learning that occurred through Challenge was raised repeatedly throughout the three years by all aspects of the programme, surfacing reflective questions around:

- What do we mean by learning?

- How and where is learning taking place?

- How do we capture our learning and share it with it others in a way that might be mutually beneficial?

This suggests that Challenge created a context where programme participants were interested in understanding practice in action, learning from experience and disseminating learning. In considering the development of the programme over the three years to date what emerges is a complex, multi-dimensional model of learning and knowing (Figure 13).

Figure 13. Challenge learning: a multi-dimensional model
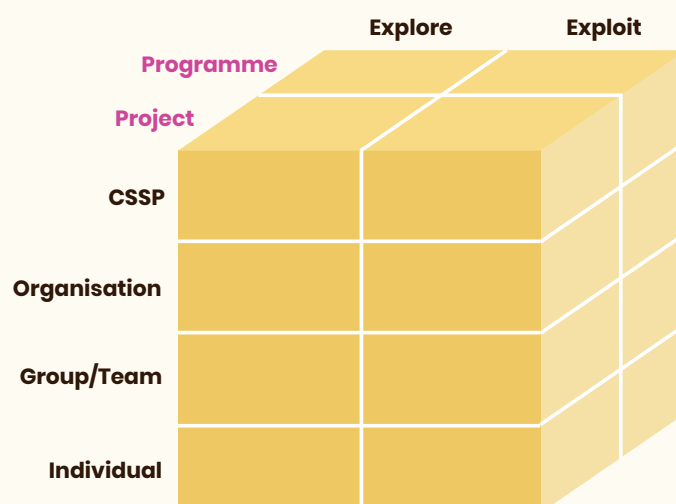
Given the limitations of two-dimensional representation the Challenge learning approach presented is more of a framework than a full-blown model, and this has been used during year three to consider the programme's approach.

Challenge not only raises questions about the nature of learning but also what forms of knowing have been enabled. Given its commitment to action research, the development of visual communications, and the models proposed in the annual discussion documents it would seem that Challenge has embraced (Heron & Reason, 1997) four ways of knowing:

1. Experiential: direct, face-to-face, engagement with the world

2. Presentational: grounded in experiential knowing it is drawn from the representational and symbolic, metaphors and imagery

3. Propositional: conceptual and manifest in theories and concepts. Often rely on the presentational to carry them, and is grounded in the experiential

4. Practical: skills, competence and knowing how to do something. This form of knowing brings the other three into fruition

Looking at participatory knowledge in this way also acts as a means of reframing 'what are we collectively learning' to 'what do we now know' as a result of Challenge.

> ...there is the important if obvious point that knowers can only be knowers when known by other knowers: knowing presupposes mutual participative awareness. It presupposes participation, through meeting and dialogue, in a culture of shared art and shared language.
> **(Heron & Reason, 1997)**

CSSPs

The notion of CSSPs was introduced in year two and has continued throughout year three. Recent research has usefully tied CSSPs together with theories of change (van Tulder & Keen, 2018) in a way that might prove helpful for AND going forward. The components suggested as necessary for 'complexity-sensitive' CSSPs are remarkably reminiscent of the approach that has been taken to Challenge (Table Two).

The processes that AND and Lead partners have experienced are very similar to those described in the literature. The programme and Lead Partner project designs and implementation have included the range of CSSP components from analysis through to reflection. Those Lead Partners who feel their wider partnerships have worked well spent considerable time in the initiation phase really understanding what the change was they wanted to effect.

This early phase of a CSSP is a delicate balancing act of creating a working framework but at the same time not making it too detailed or rigid. Visualisation of the change at this point, as was done with the infographics and mess maps, can help start to build the dialogue and test ways of working. Those partnerships that were not able to develop a testing and flexible approach found it more difficult to work collaboratively.

Now that Challenge is nearing completion Lead Partners are looking towards what might happen next. For some it is about passing the baton on, for others it is devising the next programme of change and for others it is looking to new partnership formations.

Next steps might take many different shapes including spin-off partnerships (which might build on trust and insights established by partnering), piloting innovations, policy amendments or just simply sharing lessons learned. **(van Tulder & Keen, 2001)**
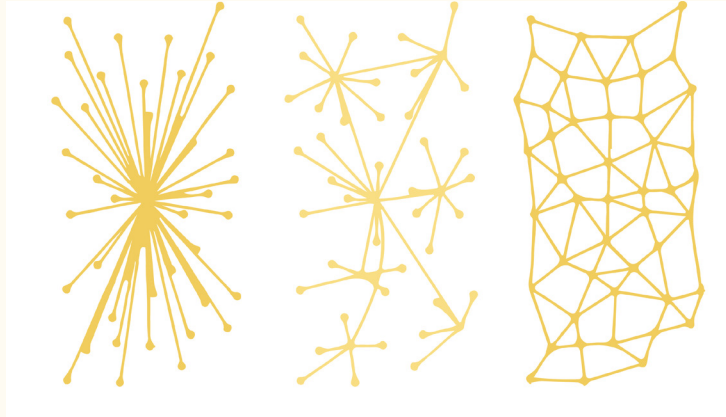
Table 2. Components required for CSSPs mapped against Challenge (adapted from van Tulder)

| Component	Challenge approach
Issue/design:	
Problem and context analysis	AND and sector research Development of the infographics
Stakeholders analysis	Launch conference AND mapping Formation of Challenge Group and Young Challenge Group Lead Partner and programme mess maps
Analysis of the intended change	Programme themes Identification of step change ambition Development of the ToC
Critical reflection on underlying assumptions	Through Challenge Groups Lead Partner meetings Action research
Process/learning:	
Intervention strategy and markers for change	Challenge programme development Development of the ToC Lead Partners delivery
Reflection on critical conditions	AND organisational wide research and programmes AND sector leadership Lead Partner meetings and monitoring feedback
A reflective approach	Action research Lead Partner feedback Lead Partner evaluations
Graphical representation	Infographics Interactive Map

Networks: Strength in numbers

There are three kinds of networks in common use for inter-organisational working (Figure 14). Centralised where everything is driven from a lead organisation; decentralised where a series of hubs, or mini networks, are formed out of a lead organisation, and distributed. In the distributed model there is no single point of strength or resources as they are spread across the network. One of the main benefits of a distributed model is that even if one of the nodes is removed the network can continue to function around it.

The desire of most inter-organisational networks is often to move towards a distributed model that is equally owned and sustained by all involved. At least one of the lead Partners describe distributed leadership as one of the ambitions for their project.

Challenge has created a number of network configurations (Figure 15) and they vary in terms of where young people are positioned. This variation is incredibly useful going forward in that it gives AND and Lead Partners the opportunity to research the varying strengths and weaknesses of each. In the first formation the lead Partner has worked with a range of other partners but has then delivered directly with/to young people. In the second formation the Lead Partner is part of a wider group that in turn then works with a range of other partners who work with young people directly.

The final configuration is a hybrid of both in that the Lead Partner has worked with some young people directly and worked with second partners to support their delivery.
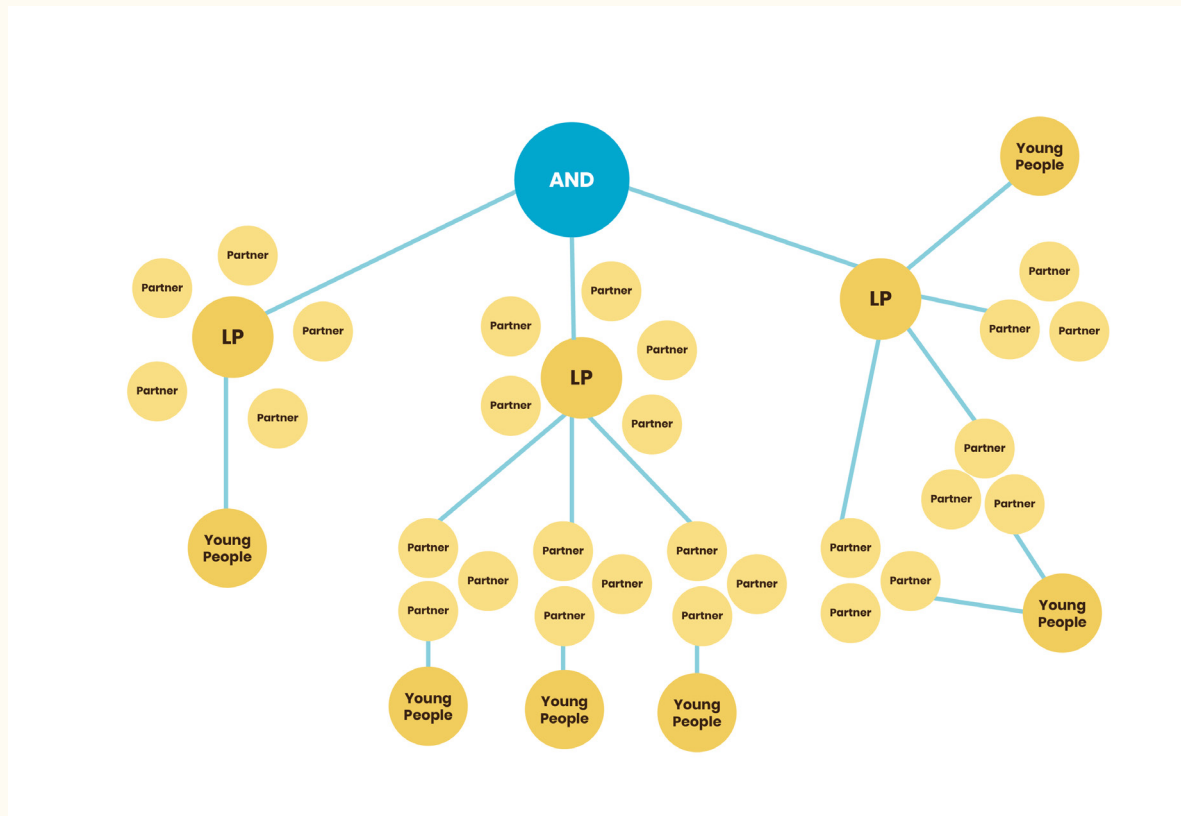
Prototyping Policy

In order to get to new solutions, you have to get to know different people, different scenarios, different places.

Emi Kolawole, Editor-in-Residence, Stanford University d.school

Although it may not have been explicit from the outset Challenge has used a prototyping approach to develop and refine the programme. In doing so it has been testing a range of policy approaches to improving cultural education in London. The main premise of the programme has been that the scope of Challenge's ambition could only be delivered through partnerships and collaborative working and the fact that the supported projects have approached this in different ways has given scope for prototyping.

It is an approach perhaps more commonly associated with the design and product development fields, but it has been increasingly applied in a policy context and is now being promoted by the Cabinet Office through its Open Policy Making Toolkit.

Prototyping was right for Challenge in a number of ways:

1. Even if AND and Lead Partners thought they knew what young people needed, it was possible that this would change once the projects were up and running

2. Testing out ideas with wider stakeholder groups is a good way of introducing diversity of thought and experience into the programme

3. Running something in practice is a tangible way of explaining to others and 'showing' what you are trying to achieve

4. It allows for greater flexibility and projects can move more quickly, they are spared the need to have everything perfect from the outset

5. If people spend over long on detailed planning they can become too committed to a particular way of delivering something and be unwilling to make changes even if that is what the context requires

Picture 9. Cultivate workshop (Cultivate)

What worked well for Challenge?

It is evident from the testimonies of Lead Partners and AND that a wide range of connections have been made across organisations, sectors and communities. Projects have involved youth workers, arts practitioners, local authorities, housing associations, property developers and young people to name a few. In some cases the connections were co-ordinated and planned in others they have emerged serendipitously from the events and activities that have been delivered.

Ten main projects have been delivered, or are nearing completion offering diverse approaches to the questions raised by addressing the provision of cultural education in London. The projects have created a range of benefits and have been allowed to evolve as contexts have changed. Allowing different models of delivery has enabled AND and Lead partners to test a range of approaches and ensure that the work they were doing was context specific.

The cultural education network across London has been extended; existing relationships have been strengthened and new relationships have started to form. Lead Partners have been mindful to try and develop distributed networks where possible, ensuring they are not dependent on single individuals or institutions for their existence.

Including action research within Challenge has provided for ongoing learning and has acted as a repository for that learning as it has unfolded. Throughout the programme AND has also been reflecting on and adapting the process, this is particularly apparent in developing the programme for the second cohort of applications to address the gap around place-making.

Young people have been included in all aspects of the programme delivery as co-designers as well as beneficiaries. This has ranged from AND's interaction with the Young Challenge Group through to the individual young #culturemakers who devised and ran their own projects.

What might have been done differently?

This question has been considered in two ways, firstly alternative approaches to the Challenge programme itself. Secondly, improvements that might have been made to the programme as it was delivered.

AND could have chosen to deliver Challenge in a number of other ways each of which would have had different benefits and disadvantages but are worth reflecting on here as they might inform future thinking and test assumptions.

Challenge could have been distributed across more but smaller projects. This might have increased the range of organisations and the geographic coverage across London but it is likely it would have created a centralised network highly dependent on AND's contribution and would have increased the likelihood of short termism in the projects.

AND could have delivered Challenge itself but as with the above option it is unlikely this would have developed the range of partners to the same degree and would have needed centralised infrastructure which may not have delivered the strength of a distributed network.

The initial projects could have been solicited rather than open application, which could have ensured stronger partnership groupings from the outset as with cohort two. Given that this was a new programme and the first time AND was acting as an investor in this way it is unlikely this would have been acceptable to either Arts Council England or the sector. The open application process was also an important formative period for AND in developing the programme.

Challenge application criteria could have been more specific about tri-sector working at the outset. This would have expanded the partnership networks but might have excluded some important projects.

The experience of Challenge also suggests it is still relatively early days for much of the cultural sector in working with the private sector as partners (as opposed to an additional source of funding).

Another possible option would have been to only fund large cultural institutions that would then be required to act as hubs for wider partnerships, much as the Barbican did with Creative Schools. This would have given some confidence that the funding was going to institutions with appropriate infrastructures and capacity but would not have guaranteed innovative projects or the community and youth focus that the Lead Partners achieved. It might also have been viewed with some scepticism by the wider cultural sector.

Finally, it might have been possible to separate awards into two elements – an initial testing phase, followed by a further investment to take the project to scale if initial testing proved successful. This might have required more programme infrastructure for AND and could have been difficult for some projects in the timescale but it would have foregrounded the R&D ethos of Challenge.

In terms of how the delivery of the approach that was adopted a number of improvements might have been helpful:

- More engagement of senior leaders at an earlier stage. It is, however, recognised that efforts were made in this area and that it proved challenging for AND and the Lead Partners to achieve

- A collective online resources space could have been created earlier to encourage sharing across the Challenge partners

- Holding some form of innovation workshops pre-application may have helped potential applicants be more ambitious and innovative in their approaches

- Given AND's wider portfolio there was some potential for role conflict as Lead Partner projects progressed, this might have been pre-empted and discussed more overtly

- There could have been more co-ordinated and strategic use of

digital activism by both Lead Partners and AND during Challenge

- Project and programme evaluation could have been connected more overtly

What has been surprising about Challenge?

Surprises have come in varying forms from building relationships to managing expectations, and from the time needed to dealing with institutional politics. Challenge has shown that given the right support individuals and groups can be surprisingly resilient in the face of significant obstacles and challenges. All of the Lead Partners experienced some form of organisational change during the process, which added layers of complexity and frustration.

In the early stages there were some surprises about how long it took to set up the projects and that internal processes had to be adapted to allow inter-organisational working and resources exchange. The need to navigate institutional politics was not a surprise in itself, but the extent to which they impinged on some projects was surprising for the Lead Partners concerned.

Although it was understood on a rational basis projects were surprised about how much longer things can taken when working in partnership. Creating extended partnership networks caused some surprises during the programme, in several cases this was focused on commitment to the project and experiencing some partners who were initially enthusiastic then disappearing without any further contact.

Quality came up as an issue and was surprising in that in some cases it created challenges for negotiating relationships, particularly with partners outside of the cultural sector. It had the potential to create partnership divisions with cultural organisations in danger of occupying a moral high ground in relation to quality.

A surprising element during the second year of Challenge was the acknowledgement of serendipity as part of the process. This took the form of recognising the value of chance occasions or conversations that had an impact on projects. This demonstrated through experience that not everything could be pinned down by forward planning and space had to be left to be responsive.

Young people taking part in the projects were sometimes surprised about things they were learning, the development in their confidence and what they had gained from trying new things. Some Lead Partners were surprised and delighted to see the extent to which young people were tackling important issues and engaging confidently with senior leaders to express their views.

It has been surprising, although perhaps not unexpected given the maturity of the programme, to see how well the second cohort Lead Partners adapted and joined the wider group. It has also been a positive surprise to see Challenge being embedded within ANDs wider portfolio and how that has enabled relationships to be extended through other routes such as LCEPs and Artsmark.

Given the wide ranging changes happening to Lead Partner organisations and the sector as a whole it has been surprising to see the consistency of some core individuals throughout Challenge as well as how close the programme delivery was to the original design.

Picture 10. CYAC Takeover, Croydon Town Hall (Creative Croydon)

Implications

Always do what you've always done, you always get what you've always gotten.
(Jessie Potter)

... there is a difference between merely having a goal and becoming committed to a huge, daunting challenge – like a big mountain to climb.
(Jim Collins)

What have we learnt about how to create a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?

- A robust and varied evidence base is important

- Having a big hairy audacious goal is motivating

- Flexibility at all levels is crucial

- It takes cross sector and collective effort and a lot of dialogue

- Being open to different voices and value sets means checking assumptions

- Prototyping, quick fails and redesign gives flexibility

- Relationship building is long term and unpredictable

- Expect change!

- There is a need to balance a range of tensions:

  - Holding vision vs allowing flexibility and supporting projects to change

  - Staying true to your values vs accommodating different value sets

  - Linear planning vs non-linear change

  - Working in familiar ways vs moving outside of comfort zones

  - Maintaining control vs allowing autonomy

  - public accountability vs risk taking

Recommendations

> I'd like to thank A New Direction for investing in long term projects that allow for experimentation and research and don't micro manage it and don't have set agendas at the outset beyond seeing what happens in a particular field.
> **(Lead Partner)**

AND

- Sharing the story: Continue to spread the stories generated by Challenge, exploring different channels and audiences. There is enough content to tell the story in different ways focusing on different aspects of the experience. Explore the potential for more digital activism

- Developing a story map: Consider developing an interactive story map where you might be able to scroll over images that give different perspectives and voices

- Development of the interactive map and partners: Continue developing the interactive map, adding partners as the work continues

- Sharing lessons with other funders: Share experiences with other funding bodies of how Challenge has adapted and provided flexibility, and balancing the roles of investor, partner, facilitator and initiator

- Continue building the resource base: It is likely resources will continue to emerge from the programme so it would be good if the resource base could keep developing

- Providing more opportunities for connections: Keep providing opportunities which might result in serendipitous developments

- Continuing to extend partnership base across the three sectors: Continue supporting connections across sectors and helping the cultural sector create meaningful dialogue

- Maintaining an on-going relationship with Lead Partners: Where feasible maintain connections to keep monitoring impact of the work to date

- Acknowledge secondary partners: Where possible contact all secondary partners to acknowledge their contributions and keep building a distributed network

Lead Partners

- Sharing the story: Continue to spread the stories generated by your project/programme, exploring different channels and audiences.

- Visual stories: Explore/continue use of infographics and other visualisations for your own projects

- Resources: Continue to build your own resource base and link to AND

- Mapping the progress of young people: Where possible keep a connection with the young people that have benefited through Challenge and monitor their progress

- Staying connected to AND: Maintain an on-going relationship with AND where feasible to continue sharing the development of your work beyond Challenge

...they were asking lots of cultural movers and shakers that came to the event to make PLEDGES about how they were going to improve the arts offer for young people. It was just a really memorable moment for me.
Lead Partner

Young people taking ownership of the programme is something that has come through consistently across many of the programmes that have been involved with Challenge...young people have been involved directly in steering groups and shaping and delivering the work.
AND

Appendices

Appendix One: Literature review themes

Year 1:

- Social justice and education, young people and 'voice'

- Inter-organisational collaboration and Communities of Practice

- Other possible themes:

- Creativity

- Sector and organisational change

- Policy development

- Professional development

Year 2:

- Social justice and education, young people and 'voice'

- Communities of Practice

- Cross-sectoral Socially Oriented Networks

- Place-making

Year 3:

- Collaborative Inquiry

- Humour and fun

- Organisational pride

Appendix Two: The Action Research Approach

> The goal of such research is to bring about an improvement in ... practice (Birley and Moreland, 1998: 34)

Action research can take different forms but tends to have several characteristics:

- It focuses on the connection between knowledge acquisition and action. It is concerned with combining practice and research so knowledge is generated about how and why improvements come about

- Action research is a collaborative partnership between the researcher and those participating in a project or programme

- Results are shared with everyone involved to inform future cycles of action and reflection

As a methodology it can encompass a range of methods but is primarily located within the qualitative domain and as such its rigour is dependent on a number of quality criteria:

- Defensibility

- Educative value

- Trustworthiness

There are several methods built into the Challenge Action Research to ensure the process has been as rigorous as possible:

- Repeating the cycle – repeating the cycle allows practice to build and improve over a period. Often the first cycle is concerned with exploring the situation, the second cycle allows for delivery action to take place and the third cycle is the overall evaluation

- Working closely with AND to build the action research approach and apply it in a credible manor

- Ensuring those involved have credibility in their fields and trust is built in the action research process

In terms of data collection there was a process of refinement in agreeing what the action research would focus on and the question for cycle two was adapted following conversations with AND and the Lead Partners. Data collection has been systematic and sustained throughout the year. Data has been drawn from different sources to allow for cross checking of findings and to draw out any anomalies. Where interviews were conducted they were done so in confidence and contributions have been anonymised accordingly.

The discussion documents were all issued in draft form and were presented to AND, the Challenge Group and the Lead Partners to allow for additional comment and change.

'Writing, or otherwise reporting the work of the project will often be an individual activity but confirmation must always be collective."

McTaggart, 1997

A literature review has also been included to aid theory building and demonstrate how the practical findings are located in a wider field. A range of sources were reviewed in appropriate fields. The literature review was developed from the core themes and asked:

- What do researchers know about the theme?

- What gaps are there, if any?

- How does the literature inform or develop our understanding of Challenge?

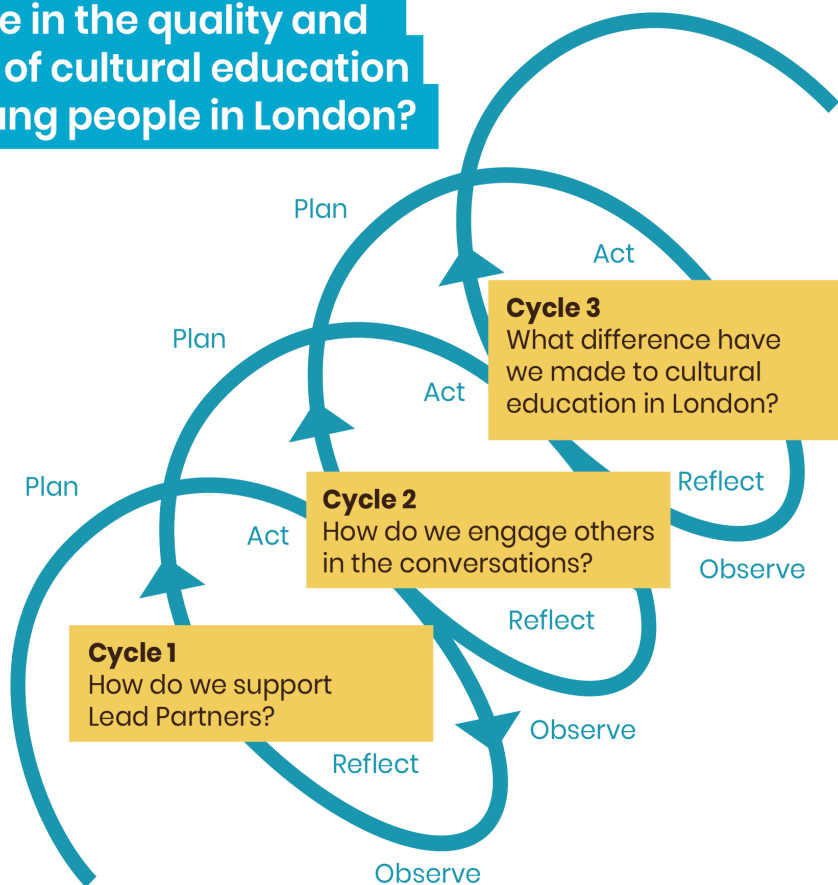- How might Challenge contribute to the body of knowledge now or in future?

Data analysis has followed a number of steps:

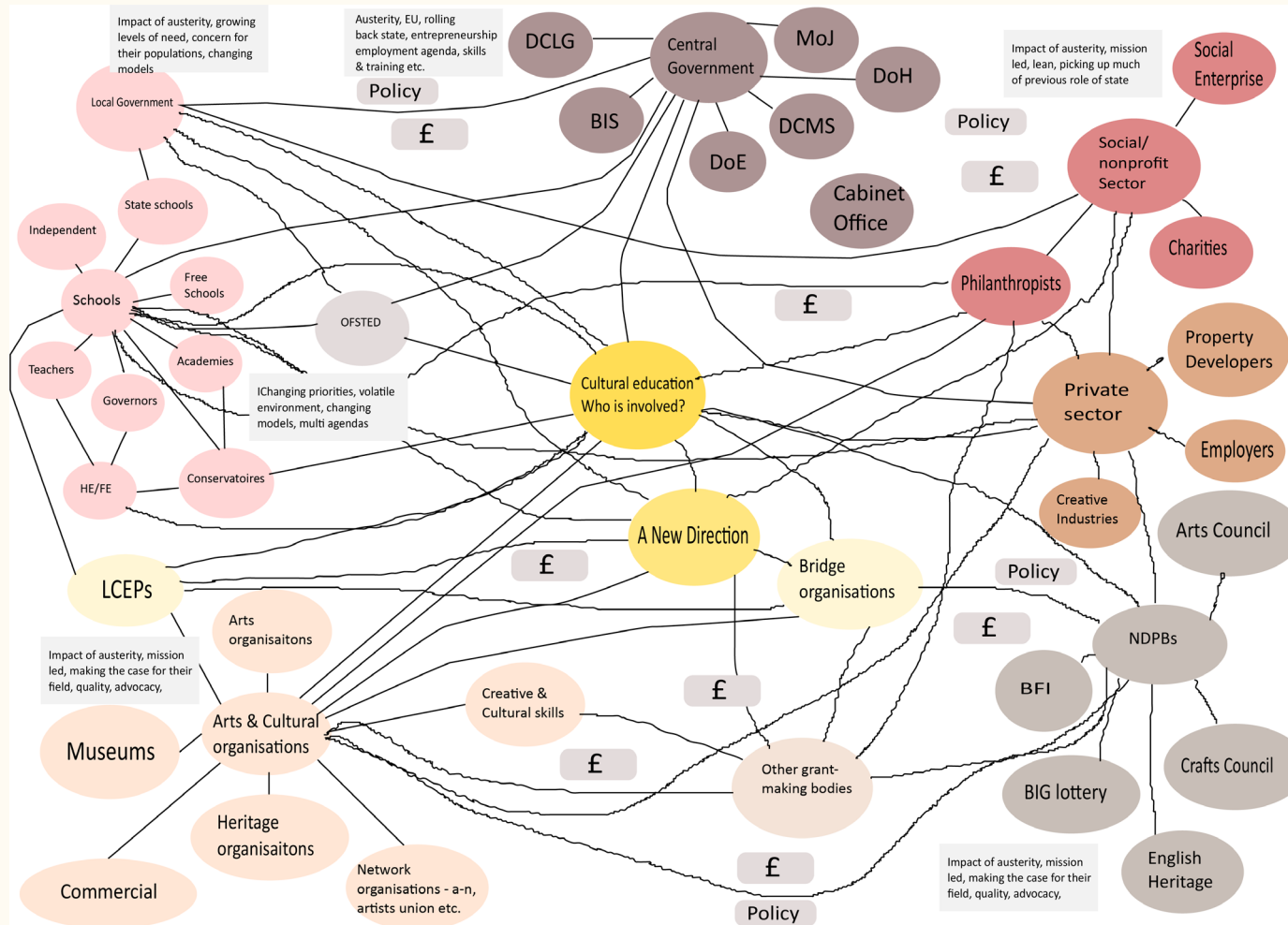| Data familiarisation	Data transcribed where necessary, reading and re-reading the data, mind-mapping initial ideas
Generating initial codes	Coding of key features and organising data – in the initial phase some 62 codes were developed
Thematic analysis	Refining coded data into core themes, developing vignettes
Theme review	Mapping the analysis and checking for anomalies or gaps
Themes defined	Narrative development, themes finalised and written up in an appropriate form

The unit of analysis within the action research is the Challenge Programme as a whole.

In addition to the researcher analysis this report is issued in the spirit of action research as a discussion document and it is expected that feedback from the Challenge network will then be fed into later versions. The aim of the action research has been to generate theoretical rather than statistical generalisations. (Ragin 1991) Issues and alternatives in comparative social research

How do we achieve a step change in the quality and equity of cultural education for young people in London?

Plan

Plan

Plan

Act

Act

Act

Cycle 3
What difference have we made to cultural education in London?

Cycle 2
How do we engage others in the conversations?

Cycle 1
How do we support Lead Partners?

Reflect

Reflect

Reflect
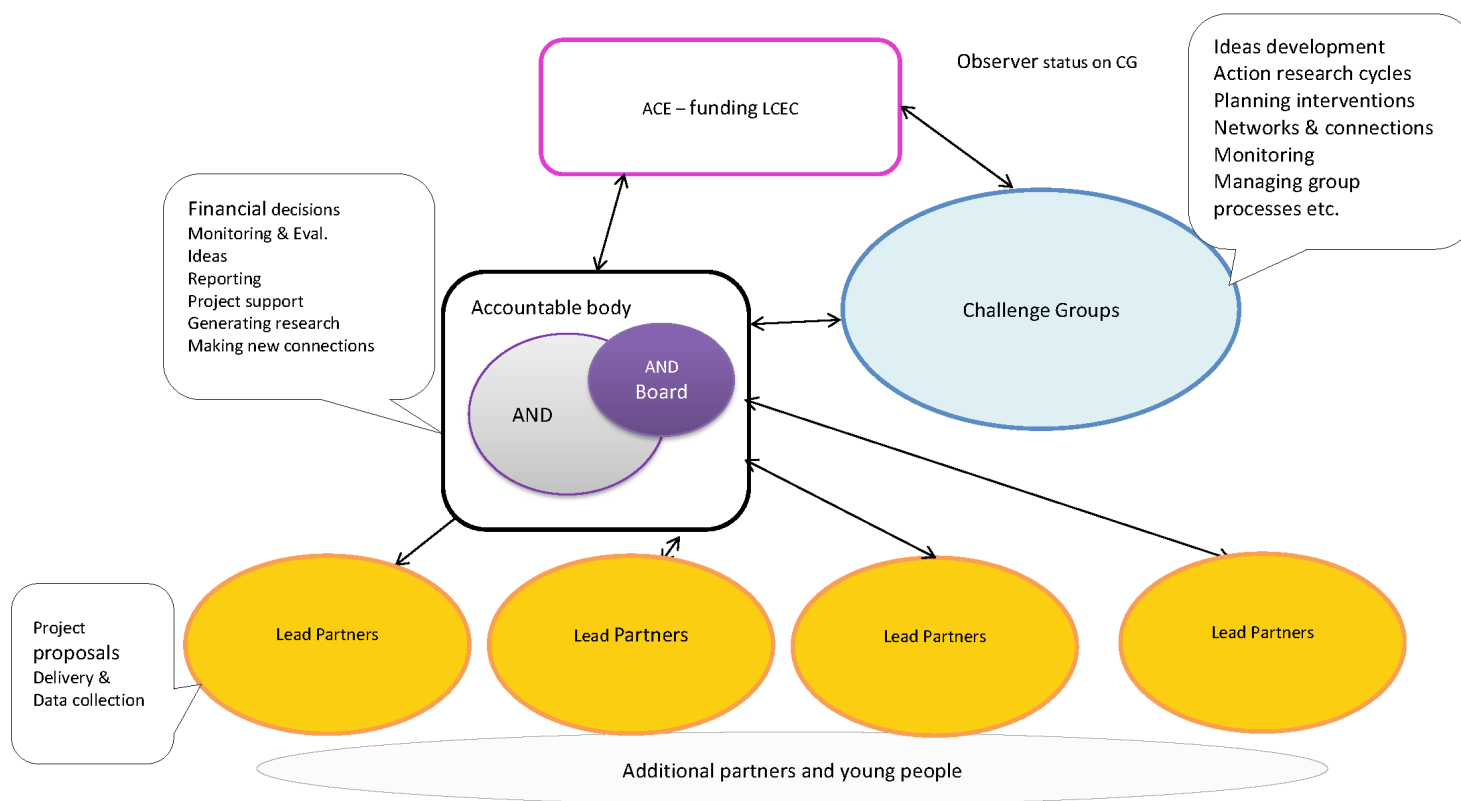
Observe

Observe

Observe

Appendix Four: indicative Theory of Change

Building awareness of the issues confronting cultural education in London	Developing cross-sectoral approaches to delivering cultural education in London	High quality cultural education is widely available in London	Young people are culturally engaged and active citizens
Researching and defining the issues impacting cultural education in London Considering the possible futures for cultural education in London Building a coalition Investing resources Sharing research Designing the Challenge programme	Brokering relationships Supporting Lead Partners Building cross-sectoral resources Focusing on the six Challenge themes Focus on place-making Investing resources	Cross sectoral social partnerships on-going and embedded Continued relationship brokering Policy influence Quality thresholds established and sustained Partnerships with other activists	Young people are accessing cultural education Equitable and accessible routes to employment in cultural sector Widest definitions of culture are in use Culture and creativity embedded in formal and informal learning Young people continue as cultural/community activists Young peoples' voice acknowledged

Appendix Five: Challenge delivery model

ACE – funding LCEC

Observer status on CG

Ideas development
Action research cycles
Planning interventions
Networks & connections
Monitoring
Managing group
processes etc.

Financial decisions
Monitoring & Eval.
Ideas
Reporting
Project support
Generating research
Making new connections

Accountable body

AND
Board

AND

Challenge Groups

Project proposals
Delivery &
Data collection

Lead Partners

Lead Partners

Lead Partners

Lead Partners

Additional partners and young people

Appendix Six: Lead Partner research questions

Challenge Lead Partner	Programme name	Research question	£	Progr. Length yrs.
Croydon Music and Arts	Creative Croydon	How can we ensure young people's voices are heard in decision making?	75,000	3
Ovalhouse	Creative Youth	How can housing associations, local cultural partners and young people work together to address barriers to cultural engagement and broaden young people's horizons?	128,600	3
The Barbican Centre	Creative Schools	How can creative organisations create a combined force when working with schools?	170,000	3
Enable Leisure and Culture	Cultivate	What makes a place, and how can children and young people contribute to building it?	115,000	3

Challenge Lead Partner	Programme name	Research question	£	Progr. Length yrs.
Westway Trust	#CultureMakers	How can a rich, local cultural ecology best support young people's progression and development?	140,000	2
London Youth:	Getting Ready Dance'	How can youth settings respond to demand for high quality dance provision, and get young London dancing?	67,685	2
Creative Futures	Music for Change	How can creative activity in early years settings prepare the under 5s for starting school?	50,000	2
Uxbridge College	Our Hayes. Our Heritage	How can discovering local heritage enable conversations about community, place and identity in a time of development and change?	25,014	1
Institute of Contemporary Art	ICA x Peabody Housing Trust x Kingston University	How should a cultural organisation, a housing association and a higher education institution collaborate to support access, agency and progression in communities across London?	25,000	1

Challenge Lead Partner	Programme name	Research question	£	Progr. Length yrs.
Lewisham Education Arts Network (LEAN)	Bellingham Partnership	How can we organise resources and opportunities around the renovation of an incredible local community building to make sure every child has the chance to take part?	27,000	1

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ALCHEMY
research & consultancy