

OUTREACH TO OWNERSHIP

PROCESS EVALUATION

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PREPARED BY:



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1. INTRODUCTION

Process evaluation of the Outreach to Ownership (O2O) pilot project was designed as an ongoing practice of reflection for the five projects and their Partners, Heritage Lincolnshire, MSDS Marine, Moder Dy, Scottish Council on Archives, The Art House, The Churches Conservation Trust, Heritage Trust Network, Historic Churches Scotland and Churches Trust for Cumbria; and Hub Partners Historic England (HE) and Historic Scotland (HES). To ensure that successes, challenges and learning could be captured in a continuous open way, enabling delivery infrastructure to be responsive.

Bright Culture led the process evaluation of the project, which sought to understand to what extent the pilot project and its activities were delivered & received as anticipated and the future viability of this structure. It concentrated on understanding:

- Perspectives & experiences of the process and structure of the pilot.
- Alignment of the funders, project managers and partners' objectives.
- Recommendations for a future National Hub.
- Effectiveness of delivery, support and communication.

2. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

A variety of methods were used to capture process evaluation and reflections from partners and HE/HES to provide safe spaces for people to record, structure, think about, reflect upon and develop personal and collective critical learning about the programme and its delivery; this included:

- An evaluation plan for the whole project was designed, detailing the overarching process enquiry questions that the evaluation sought to answer and shared with the partners and HE/HES at the beginning of the delivery phase.
- Practical evaluation guidance and questions that the partners could integrate into their activity to collect feedback from communities and prompts to encourage their own learning.
- Calls with each partner to support them in integrating evaluation and reflection in their work were held at the beginning of the delivery phase.
- Monthly calls with HE/HES to discuss project delivery and process reflections recorded.
- A mid-point evaluation online group session with all partners in May 2022, focussing on process evaluation.

- An online survey was designed for each project that the partners could use to obtain both process and impact evaluation from facilitators, artists, partners or stakeholders at the end of project delivery.
- An end-of-project online group session with all partners in September 2022, concentrating on the process.
- Calls with HE and HES in Sept/October 2022 to capture end-of-project process reflections.

3. ENQUIRY QUESTIONS

The following questions were identified and agreed upon as the overarching focus and where responses would be most beneficial in terms of learning and future development.

1. Did the opportunity to apply for partnership and funding reach & engage the intended people?
2. Did the grant-giving application process work well from the perspective of the partners? Was the funding visible and accessible?
3. Did the aims of the funders (AHRC/HE/HES) and the aims of the partner organisations align?
4. Has the hub supported partners in delivering their projects?
5. Has the process of development and delivery mechanisms functioned effectively?
6. How effective was the model of HE/HES working with intermediaries rather than directly with community groups? How did partners navigate this process?
7. Would the same model work for directly funding community groups?
8. How could the process be scaled up for a National Hub?
9. Has there been resource implications for partners taking part in the pilot?
10. Has there been resource implications for HE and HES in supporting the project?
11. How can the pilot influence HE and HES roles organisationally in funding and supporting projects?

The following pages of this report explore the findings, reflections and learnings in response to these enquiry questions.

4. FINDINGS-PROJECT DESIGN

Project Structure. The structure and phasing of design, delivery and dissemination have been a strength of the project. Without this, the hub partners felt that the project wouldn't have been so successful. Partners and HE/HES responded that this structure has supported partners in developing their thinking and research ideas. The capacity-building element of the project has enabled partners to access others in the cohort who were facing similar issues and share learning.

'The structure of the project and how it has been run, it feels like it has been half capacity building, training for us, learning new skills and upskilling us and half independent project. Which has felt like a really nice balance. It is definitely what I needed going into this. I wouldn't have been able to do it if it had been one of these things, I needed both of them to sit side by side, which I feel has worked really well.' project partner

Layered Delivery. Partners felt that the distinct project layers of AHRC funders, HE/HES hub partners, project partners, and community groups/participants, which formed the project structure, were vital to the success of the projects and undertaking meaningful community engagement with diverse communities. The consensus was that if any of these layers were removed, it wouldn't have been feasible to deliver and engage with communities in the ways the pilot project had. For example, if the partner layer had been removed, HE/HES would not have been able to reach the community groups and their gatekeepers in the same way. AHRC/HE/HES wouldn't have had the links and connections and, in some cases, established relationships of trust that the intermediary partner organisations already had to build on.

The challenge of having a delivery model like this, with many different layers, is that multiple objectives inevitably create more work. For example, project partners shared that their participation in capacity-building and evaluation activities was challenging when it diverted time and capacity from their own projects. So whilst a critical part of the overall O2O project objectives, it was hard for project partners to balance this with their own objectives. The community participants were, to a large extent, shielded from this.

Aims & Objectives. Partners shared that the overarching O2O project objectives weren't relevant for most of their community groups. In many cases, it was hard enough for them to grasp what the individual projects were trying to achieve without explaining the wider context in too much detail. Groups weren't interested in what was happening behind the scenes as they were already stretched and resistant to committing to other things. One project had a simple information sheet they emailed out about the project, with a couple of sentences about O2O.

'Besides the information sheet we sent out to everyone, we avoided telling them about the whole research project and where everything came from. Because in my mind, this is Outreach to Ownership; the funding comes from here, then its Historic England/ Historic Scotland doing it, then this is our project.. it was tricky because we did want to mention the funders, and we did, but it felt like a lot of levels to communicate to people clearly.'

project partner

The hub partners shared that the aims of HE/HES and AHRC are aligned, as they are both interested in the potential model and the bigger picture. As public bodies, they also understand the policy concerns shaping this funding call and resulting activity, even if agendas may differ in England and Scotland.

'HE/HES's primary aim is ascertaining whether or not this is a successful model, while the partners' primary aim is the successful delivery of their project – everyone involved is invested in the success of the programme, and the partners have been very supportive of us as funders gathering and measuring the data we need.'

Historic England

Application Process. Partners shared that the timescale for responding to the call out for projects was very tight, which meant their initial ideas on how best to structure projects in some cases needed revising in the development phase. In future delivery, it was proposed that further information be provided regarding funding and delivery models during the application process. For example, utilising budget to pay for freelance roles to support/enable delivery where the capacity or skill didn't exist within project partners. It was also suggested that this could be accompanied by guidance on risk considerations related to budget management.

From an HE/HES perspective, the application process received a more significant number of applicants than was anticipated, with a large proportion of these being from organisations that hadn't worked with HE before. The pre-existing grant mechanism in HE and their ability to effectively navigate and manage the grant process meant that contracting partners and managing the payments has been simple and contributed to the effective delivery. If this hadn't existed, systems would have needed to be created from scratch, which would have been time-consuming and more challenging within the time constraints.

Delivery timescale. Partners agreed that the delivery timescale was too short and squeezed the whole project, particularly fitting in the design stage and the delivery over the summer when engagement with community groups is challenging. The timing also put people under pressure when committing to capacity building; this was increased when teams were made up of people working part-time. Project partners also noted that working with multiple delivery partners, whilst being beneficial, it does bring greater complexity to project delivery in terms of aligning diaries and agreeing on things.

Project Design stage. The project's design stage was crucial for some partners, who felt that it encouraged detailed planning, which was helpful in really defining what they wanted to achieve and how they would do this. It was commented that embedding planning in this way doesn't always happen in projects, and organisations can move into the delivery phase without always having clarity around the required objectives, methods and responsibilities. Other Partners found the planning stage onerous and were keen to get going quicker with delivery (particularly given the tight timescale), as they had a clear idea of what they wanted to achieve.

'Because several of the organisations have worked with us before – they are used to the grant-giving structure of HE. The phasing of the delivery wasn't anticipated. We didn't say what we anticipated – some partners felt the design phase was too lengthy because they were used to working with us. But others really appreciated having a longer design phase. Some were itching to get going – but this was an issue created by the timetable. The design phase was really important to understanding practical issues.' Historic England

The Hub Partnership. The relationship between HE and HES has functioned very well. The opportunity to work across borders has given a different perspective on some issues (such as grant-making in the community). HE/HES felt that having the hub in a larger organisation with access to expertise in various areas has led to responding successfully and relatively speedily to partners' needs. They also shared that involving Bright Culture as evaluators as soon as feasible had significantly contributed to the support offered to the partners. HE felt that the programme wouldn't have progressed as well as it did without the positive relationship between HE and HES and the clarity of the combined vision, which was really valuable. Being similar organisations with similar structures helped with shared understanding.

Breaking down geographical boundaries. The project structure has encouraged and made possible connections and delivery beyond regional borders, enabling the development of new and broader relationships and partnerships. This has paved the way for sharing good practice regionally and within a national context. Partners felt that the delivery partnership between HE/HES was key to enabling this and encouraged the linking and sharing of knowledge across England and Scotland. One example of this was the Bridging The Gap project, where participation in the O2O project has helped increased understanding and awareness of similar issues affecting church buildings in England and Scotland and strengthened relationships.

'Building a working relationship with Historic Environment Scotland and Historic England has been really key, as well as building links across different parts of Scotland.' Project Partner

5. FINDINGS – CAPACITY BUILDING

Capacity. The capacity-building support provided alongside project delivery was seen as unusual, beneficial and a valuable part of the project. However, the time required to participate in this was a big ask for some partners; and the investment in this over their delivery was sometimes out of balance.

'I feel like I have spent more time on capacity building than I have project management & research to date.'

Project Partner

'Trying to do the two things together means that capacity building has taken up the slack in your diary that is dedicated to the project.' Project Partner

Expectations. Partners would have liked more clarity around the commitment required for the capacity-building strand at the tendering and design phase. Although the capacity-building support was viewed as very good, it was seen as a considerable time commitment that didn't always feel proportional to the grant received to deliver the projects. If this time wasn't built into the planning and budgets, it became problematic as it diverted time from delivery.

'We have had to flex our staffing in order to meet the demands of the workshops, and we are lucky that we are of the size that is able to do this, but we recognise for some of the smaller organisations participating, that is going to be a real challenge. That being said, they have been very enriching, and we have felt we are operating in a very supportive environment.' project partner

Adaptability. Some partners felt that the capacity building needed to be more responsive to the skills and experience of the partners, and the offer could have been more agile, but they recognised that was due to being a pilot. Other partners felt the offer was reactive to Partners' needs and the required information and skills. Partners came to the project with different experiences and skills, which meant that they had different requirements from the capacity building, which provided some challenges with pitching. The hub partners recognised this and adapted sessions and support as they tried to meet all the partner's needs.

Both the HE/HES and the partners expressed that the ideal would have been for most of the capacity building to have taken place before delivery started, but this wasn't feasible due to the squeezed timetable.

'I think pitching capacity-building content can be awkward as some partners are very experienced in some areas and others less so. This puts us in a position where some partners attend sessions they don't need while others would be lost without them. We decided to require attendance to strengthen relationships and to try and facilitate peer-to-peer learning, but I think that has left some partners watching sessions on issues they don't need support with. We have attempted to remedy this by cutting the length of the sessions and pivoting from a training delivery model to more of a surgery and troubleshooting session, which I hope will be helpful. Partner 121's during the development stage were popular, and I would have loved to have been able to deliver more of those over the course of the programme.' hub partner

Skills. Most of the partners expressed how they saw the project as a real investment in their professional development. As a result, one of the project's significant impacts will be the upskilling of partners and the people they share this learning with. Several partners felt the benefits of the capacity-building strand had been undersold at the tendering stage. If it had been positioned slightly differently and called a professional development programme, this would have been easier to allocate time and budget and better understood by organisations.

Feedback from partners was that they had hoped that community engagement lead/facilitators would have been able to attend capacity-building sessions, but this wasn't feasible within the timescale. It was felt that for any future projects, providing some capacity-building sessions focused on the facilitators/engagement leaders would be beneficial and build skills and understanding.

'The capacity building workshops have been a real help, that break between conducting the project and learning new skills has been really helpful.' project partner

Peer-to-Peer Support. An essential and enriching element of capacity building was the opportunity for Partner organisations to work together. This enabled sharing of knowledge and learning from the other partner's experiences. Working in this way meant that partners could see where there were overlapping approaches and opportunities for collaboration on this project and future work. Partners felt this was a beneficial way of working and good use of resources to coordinate with all the projects simultaneously. Partners view the forging of these links as an important legacy of the O2O project.

'The ability to work with other organisations that are very different from us, has enabled us to really diversify how we think about outreach, ownership and engagement.'

project partner

'Having the capacity building, where we can communicate with other people on the same project and see how different people have interpreted the same brief differently and share experiences, struggles and figure things out together has been really valuable.'

project partner

'Getting to partner with everyone here, work alongside them, it has been so refreshing ... I have never done a funded project like this; sometimes you have to battle to know who else is taking part, never mind actually working alongside.'*project partner*

'It's been great to work with the different organisations – we work in different ways. Great to see how other people have approached the project.' *project partner*

6. FINDINGS – COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Widening Reach. Being involved in the project has expanded partners' thinking about how and whom they engage with through their work. Notably, those interested in the research haven't necessarily been whom the Partner organisations anticipated.

'Making contact with people who we won't normally connect with. Which has definitely changed the way I think I would plan projects like this in the future.'
project partner

Timing. Community engagement delivered in a meaningful way in such a short delivery timeframe is challenging. It takes significant time and skill to develop relationships (in some cases from scratch) and trust, particularly when working in an open and evolving way. The time required is increased further when embedding a co-curation approach, as it often requires the people engaging to commit to giving up their time for sustained engagement. Partners also faced challenges in the engagement and recruitment of community groups due to the delivery period being over the summer when most community groups are much less active. Community groups also reported lower engagement levels from people due to ongoing Covid-19 concerns.

'Co-curation/co-production has been emphasised during capacity building sessions, but it is very hard to do this in a meaningful way on such a short project-without alienating people or putting too much of a burden on your communities to create things.' project partner

Community group fatigue. Partners reported that in some locations there are multiple projects being delivered, so some community groups have periods where they constantly receive engagement requests. This can be challenging for the groups when considering if the offer meets the community group's objectives, to what extent it benefits the people they support, and if they have the capacity to engage. Experiences of being involved in activities that don't go as predicted or not feeling that their input and needs were valued or understood can lead to fatigue and suspicion of future opportunities. To combat this requires a long lead time and adequate resources to ensure relationships are developed from solid foundations. Ensuring that communities know that the relationship is sincere and not tokenistic, particularly when wishing to embed a co-curation approach.

'It's not a huge amount of time to do anything meaningful... the last thing we want is to upset any of our partners or stakeholders, and we certainly don't want to appear as tick boxing anybody; because we are genuine in what we want to achieve and the last thing we want to do is dent our reputation, so we have to be mindful of that.' project partner

Community Facilitation. Several of the partners trained and supported community group members to take on the roles of facilitators, which was very successful. In many cases, these facilitators were given flexibility over small budgets and how these would be best spent supporting people engaging in the workshops. Part of this process was working with people who were already community connectors and had established relationships and trust within communities to identify potential facilitators. These relationships were crucial in reaching people. Some projects also developed steering groups made up of participants and stakeholders who supported the development of the projects, giving real power and ownership to the communities.

Capacity. Partners shared that embedding co-curation of the process requires working in a bespoke, open way to allow space for joint ownership and development. This takes time and is unpredictable, as communities and partners will have multiple interests, perspectives and needs. Typically, communities and volunteers will have numerous commitments and often work part-time, so communication and commitment can be challenging. They also felt that asking too much of the communities to shape the process would lead to drop out.

It can be a bit like wrestling with mist, working with community groups; they drift in and out and getting them round a table can be challenging. project partner

'If we had put too much of the ball in their court, I'm not sure it would have happened, we needed a structure that they could step into and take part and not have to take on too much responsibility, as they are just so busy.'
project partner

Expectations. A fluid co-curation approach can be intimidating and off-putting for some people (both those delivering and participating) who prefer clear structures and defined outputs at the beginning of activities and projects. Therefore, exploring and understanding people's delivery and project management style and concerns at the start of delivery is very important. Discussing these openly with a project team and supporting those facilitating with resources (budget & time) and guidance can be very helpful in building confidence and skill. Some communities also came to activities/workshops without receiving information or training and had different expectations, this can be challenging.

'Managing expectations is really important, certainly found that people were coming to workshops expecting to be given something, whether that was training or advice. But actually, we were taking something and asking them questions, that was difficult to co-create when you are actually trying to get information to inform and eventually report.' project partner

7. FINDINGS-FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Context. Within the O2O project, the brief was intentionally broad to give people the space to co-curate their ideas. However, Partner feedback suggested they would have found it easier to have had more guidance and a thematic area to respond on. HE shared that they received over 500 applications for a heritage community grant when taking a thematic approach, so the evidence would suggest a tighter context is helpful when developing a project idea and may encourage more people to respond.

Time Frame. The lead time, from launching the project and recruiting the partners, needed to be longer and was at a difficult time of year; this was symptomatic of the whole timetable being compressed. Therefore, the application phase should ideally occur outside the festive period or summer holidays and provide longer for people to respond. Ideally, more staff would be available to answer any queries as they arise. In addition, partners felt it would be helpful for future applicants to access case studies of previous projects to give people an idea of the different project possibilities. The hub partners suggested applications could be a two-stage process in future, where partners are paid to work up ideas over a few months & supported with targeted sessions, resulting in viable projects being funded.

The partners and hub partners repeatedly mention time as one of the most significant constraints of the project. In future delivery, the suggestion is that to ensure opportunities for meaningful engagement and successful outcomes, the time allowed at each stage (recruitment, design, delivery, and dissemination) should be doubled.

'A National hub should have a regular and predictable timetable for applications to become partners. The team should have at least 3 months once the scheme is designed to advertise the upcoming opportunity (online and in person at relevant events/town halls etc) and ensure that those who would most benefit are aware of it and know how to apply. This work should continue once the scheme is up and running.' hub partner

'The application window should be suitably timed and long enough to give people time to co-create ideas with their partners/participants. Rounds of funding would ensure that those working on an idea who didn't get to the point of application in one round could apply in a subsequent round, meaning that time has not been wasted co-creating work with participants that will come to nothing. The Hub should consider paying for applications. The application period should be fully staffed, and a Hub representative should always be available to support applicants/answer questions/respond to requests for reasonable adjustments, and facilitate them.' hub partner

Design Phase. In future delivery, it is essential that partners clearly understand expectations at the beginning of delivery and each month's milestones. Providing a fully joined-up structure and plan for the different layers will ensure that people can plan their resources accordingly and reduce the pressure created by uncertainty. Having an extended design phase would also allow more individually responsive skills development support to be offered.

Infrastructure. The pilot project has shown that a National Hub should be situated in an organisation that has the ability to manage financial functions and grant-giving with speed, skill and flexibility. Losing a key member of the HE delivery team for long stretches due to illness provided some learning. It demonstrated that for a hub to function when a team member is lost, it requires more than one member of an organisation to be the AHRC PI (the current AHRC model is a single PI). So that everything doesn't need to be paused or delayed until someone returns.

Hub partners reflected that their role is to facilitate the process, unlock ability and empower the community partners. But to do this, you need an agile and resourced infrastructure, so you can react to needs and changing circumstances.

Budgets. Flexibility is critical when adopting a co-curation approach, and the different resource requirements needed for different audiences can be challenging to predict. Some community relationships may happen quickly, while others take more investment to get to the same place, making it difficult to budget. It would be helpful if future projects allowed the opportunity to have a contingency built in to help cover this unpredictable nature, *'so hard to be certain when everything is uncertain'*. The pilot has shown that to deliver the support and infrastructure required for the project, more time and budget need to be built for the hub partners and the delivery partners.

Hybrid Working. Virtual and hybrid working increased accessibility, as it wouldn't have been possible to support all the partners without virtual tools. However, in future planning and a potential UK-wide hub, there is a need to consider how opportunities to meet in person can be accommodated. Providing opportunities to be in the same physical space benefits people by building connections and sharing in a way that is much harder remotely. But in-person opportunities need to provide maximum benefit, and people need to be compensated adequately for their time and travel costs.

There is potential for an online forum that could be an ongoing space for partners to communicate together. However, the challenge of spaces like this is getting people to use them when they initially don't know each other. It must also be acknowledged that people are likely to use multiple communication channels already. As there are already numerous chat channels that can be used professionally, such as Slack, Teams Chat & Google chat, it might not be an effective use of resources to reinvent the wheel and create a new platform. Furthermore, encouraging people to use new online spaces can take a lot of ongoing time. Unless very dynamic and valuable, people tend to drift back to familiar forms of communication. This was seen in the trial use of Slack in the project, as most of the partners reverted to email contact. Undoubtedly, people will have different preferences, but it will be worth exploring how a project can use forms of communication that people are already more likely to use, such as WhatsApp & Facebook groups.

Capacity Building Support & Resources. Future delivery needs to consider how capacity-building support is positioned and communicated. For example, ensuring that the required commitment is transparent at the application phase so this can be built into budgets & project plans. In addition, considering the language used may impact engagement, labelling this as a professional development strand may be interpreted as more beneficial to organisations and easier for people to justify the investment of time.

Learning from the capacity building strand suggests a future offer could include more pre-prepared resources available to all. In-person, contact should be shorter, less frequent and focussed on key themes. Ensuring that it is relevant to those attending and broadening who might attend, for example, extending the offer to community facilitators where appropriate.

The hub should be populated with helpful learning tools and models specific to the kinds of needs partners will have to allow partners to access learning and training support when it best suits them rather than a training delivery timetable. That would free up capacity-building sessions to be more about access to expert support and peer-to-peer learning.' hub partner

It would be helpful to have some form of consultancy framework with a range of named people whom the partners can consult on specific topics, similar to how evaluation consultants were able to work with the partners. This would give project leads confidence that they don't have to have all the answers and provide access to specific expertise.

'I sense that having you guys to plug in really helped because that was the practical on-the-ground support that people needed, and it helped keep that discussion element going. I got that sense that people knowing they could draw on you was valuable. In a formal hub, maybe, you would have more people with expertise to draw upon.'
hub partner

The hub partners feel that there are three essential levels of Partner support that is required to ensure that different experiences and skills are supported.

1. Resources that people can access themselves through an online platform/portal. This will require initial financial investment and ongoing updating and maintenance from people skilled in building E-learning.
2. Taking part in a cohort, providing opportunities to learn and share and developing further peer-to-peer support.
3. Having direct access to the O2O team and other experts and the support they can offer. Potentially with more opportunities for collaboration between the hub and partners, such as hub partners being able to attend some activities.

In the future, more resources could be created on the back of live events, which could be used independently. One of the benefits of this is that, over time, some of the resource costs decrease. This could be a virtual learning environment similar to the model universities offer for distance learning or a more detailed section of resources with content to read and watch. There may be potential to link with existing online learning opportunities in the cultural sector. For example, Cornwall Museum Partnerships offers bitesize eLearning modules on marketing, fundraising, governance, and business planning. Crucially these will need to be coherent, user-friendly and light touch.

Project Outputs. Future consideration should be given to the most valuable outputs for the partners' research projects and whether lengthy, time-consuming reports are the best option. Or whether partners can be given more support in creating resources, toolkits and creative outputs that can be used practically by people or are more suitable for advocacy.

Community Engagement. A national hub needs to consider the sustainability of hub partners' relationships with the delivery partners and their relationships with their communities. Community relationships would be maintained in an ideal world, but this is challenging without sustained funding. There must be careful and realistic management of expectations and consideration given to whether organisations can repeatedly apply for funds. The impact of dipping in and out of community relationships can lead to mistrust, disappointment and future disengagement, which can be difficult to repair.

Working with communities in this way also requires ongoing flexibility to changing circumstances on the ground. Considering that the very nature of a co-designed approach means you know something will happen, but not what, tell us that the approach to project management must be flexible.

Volunteering. Partners' experience is that volunteer fatigue is a real barrier, as you are asking people to take part in something and give up their time for the greater good, often without any immediate personal benefit for them (such as in research). There are now greater expectations of volunteer contributions to enable organisations to function, and those who volunteer their time often undertake multiple volunteer roles. So when planning research, it is vital to consider how people can be compensated and thanked for their contribution and time.

Evaluation & Reflection. The hub partners shared that building in time to continually appraise and reflect has been powerful and beneficial. Having external and objective evaluation support can provide the structure for this, which can be challenging to prioritise internally when delivering and can be an important part of the co-design process.

Risk Appetite. Risk is an exciting part of a project such as this, and tolerance for this will likely differ for AHRC, HE/HES and partners. Exploring and articulating these different appetites clearly at the beginning would be helpful in any future delivery.

The hub partners have had conversations with delivery partners about what has been feasible within the parameters of the pilot and how **'good is good enough'**. If partners did their best to mitigate risk and learn from challenges, that is all that could be asked for. There is no blueprint for this type of community delivery. If the aim is for partners to innovate and be comfortable stretching themselves even if it doesn't work, there needs to be openness and acceptance of risk and failure. Hub partners expressed that in future delivery, it must be clearly understood that community-led research will never be the same as academic-led research, even if academics are involved.

There needs to be space in the delivery for trying, failing, and sharing that learning, as this will help communities and the sector develop and move forward. In the future, more can be done to develop the understanding of good practice in community-led research and how communities can actively be involved in shaping this.

8. CONCLUSION

The overall concept of the Outreach to Ownership pilot project was ambitious, with big-picture objectives that weren't easy to define or pursue within the timeframe. The project was unusual in that it is rare for communities to lead research like this and be actively involved in shaping the design and delivery.

Despite these challenges, the project resulted in many positive outcomes (explored more in the impact evaluation) and a wealth of learning, reflections and ideas related to the process and delivery. The hub partners created a safe, open and reflective environment that ran through the delivery and communications. Because of this, the evaluation has run smoothly and effectively. Rather than shying away from conversations about challenges and improvements, hub and delivery partners have embraced the opportunity to reflect critically, without judgement. This honesty can be rare in project delivery. It is refreshing and ensures that the pilot has served the purpose of testing, and, as hub partners put it, ultimately, this project has been about learning.

The pilot has taken steps towards empowering organisations to be leaders and advocates in their areas of expertise, sharing and disseminating their experience and learning with the hub partners and beyond. A significant part of success will be in the longer-term impact. If feasible, further evaluation in 1-2 years could be undertaken to see if the delivery partners have changed practices, approached projects differently or sustained relationships due to their involvement in the pilot project and the support given.

Learning from the delivery of the pilot structure is considerable and offers multiple insights and reflections that should be considered when developing a National Hub. For the hub partners, the project has resulted in learning that will inform future grant opportunities at HE. It provides a model for more community-led funding, which aligns with HE's objectives for inclusion, diversity and equality, and well-being. It has also resulted in a positive collaborative relationship between HE & HES, which provides an excellent basis to build on.

In addition, the project has highlighted the challenges and opportunities of this kind of co-creative approach and the time, resources and appetite for risk required to engage in meaningful engagement.

'Working closely with the partners has given me insight into the challenges these organisations are facing, and putting together the capacity building programme has been a valuable experience in terms of making sure events deliver value for participants.' hub partner

'It has highlighted the issues we have with one-year grant funding allocations, given the amount of time it takes to build solid connections with community participants. It has demonstrated the value of groups of grantees working on similar timetables and supporting each other. It has given HE an opportunity to learn from organisations more deeply rooted in their communities.'
hub partner