

AHRC Creative Communities

Toolkit Module 4: Co-Creating Culture Policy



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This AHRC Creative Communities module aims to enhance understanding of co-design in policy making and share some ideas on how to inform policy makers by using your R&D as an evidence base.

Module 4 builds on the learnings from:

Module 1: Community R&D: How to take part in cultural research and development as a creative community

Module 2: Communicating Innovation: How to share and profile your research as a creative community

Module 3: Best practice in sustaining cross-sector collaborations



What is Policy?

- A set of ideas, plans or strategies developed by a government, business or institution to make decisions and achieve a specific goal or objective
- It ensures that outcomes align with objectives



Who Makes Policy?

- National and devolved governments, by mayoral authorities in England, and by local authorities
- A broad range of people including politicians, civil servants and staff at arms length bodies
- Thinktanks, universities, NGOs, charities and businesses can also influence policy



Why Does Policy Matter?

- It responds to public needs and challenges and has the ability to shape society
- It can influence everything from economic growth to healthcare, education, infrastructure, environment, public safety and belonging
- It helps governments achieve their goals and contributes to a better quality of life for everyone
- Engaging with policy makers can be an effective pathway to impact

What is Culture Policy?

- The actions and strategies that aim to strengthen, grow, promote and regulate activities in the arts, culture, heritage and creative industries sectors
- This includes recognising their importance in: contributing to the economy, driving growth, creating opportunity for young people, enriching communities and boosting reputation locally and nationally



How Can We Co-Design Culture Policy?

- Engage cross-sector participants, including young people, in a collaborative process to ensure diverse voices are represented
- Bring people together using in-person events and online tools, such as online meetings or an online Policy Forum, to make co-design as accessible as possible
- Guide participants to consider opportunities, challenges and needs as the basis for co-designing policy solution suggestions
- Test ideas with cross-sector stakeholders to ensure the policy reflects the needs of all involved
- Keep partners in the loop to ensure a meaningful ongoing co-creation process
- Use participatory methods to capture insights - these could include digital engagement tools like Slido or activity sheets to guide discussion and ensure everyone is able to contribute



AHRC Creative Communities:

The Creative Communities Policy Labs used a carefully considered combination of digital and print tools to creatively facilitate discussions – including this group activity sheet that inspired insightful conversation and generated new policy solution suggestions:



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The Idea

Strategy What needs to happen?

Actors Who can make this happen?

Change What would success look like?

Timescale



- Short
- Medium
- Long

Scope and Scale



- Small
- Medium
- Large



Co-Design Opportunities

Co-Design Challenges

Bring together diverse expertise and lived experience	Time and capacity to authentically co-design policy
Enable all participants to engage equally	Translating policy making language for different sectors
Connect different issues and highlight common needs across sectors	Maintaining ongoing engagement with participants
Build cross-sector connections	Resource needed to continue work and action next steps
Support meaningful policy development	Engaging policy makers across shifting political contexts



UK Government

Reach out to MPs who work in your area of interest or have spoken on this.

Contribute to calls for evidence, inquiries and consultations

Engage with an All-Party Parliamentary Group relevant to your area of work

Arms Length Bodies

This can include Arts Council England, Creative Scotland, Arts Council of Northern Ireland, or Arts Council of Wales

Who Can We Co-Design Culture Policy With?

Devolved Governments

MSPs, MLAs or MSs who work in your area of interest or have spoken on this

Contribute to calls for evidence, inquiries and consultations for Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly or The Senedd

Third Sector

Including charities, trusts and foundations, and community organisations of all types

Best Practice in Policy Making

- Socialise co-designed policy recommendations with policy makers and cross-sector partners in your devolved context as they are being developed
- Be open to feedback to ensure your policy recommendations have rigour
- Keep the devolved context front of mind when creating and sharing policy recommendations: this will influence their shape, reception and how they work in practice
- Consider how you share your learnings with participants, across sectors and with local and national policymakers – different audiences might use language differently and respond to different formats
- Consider opportunities for ongoing communication and public engagement to share your policy recommendations. See the [Creative Communities Toolkit Module 2](#)
- Consider next steps and how you can build on your policy recommendations, establish more connections and ensure their legacy – ongoing relationships with partners can lead to new ideas and opportunities, new funding and collaboration opportunities in your devolved context



Examples of Co-Designed Policy Recommendations:

- [AHRC Creative Communities](#) is developing a new evidence base on how and why culture can address regional inequality, support **devolution**, enable belonging and break down barriers to opportunity with communities in devolved settings across all four nations of the UK
- The programme hosted a series of [UK Policy Labs](#) 2024 and [Policy Sprints](#) in 2024-25, to co-create policy solution suggestions with cross-sector creative communities and Creative Communities worked closely with policy makers in devolved contexts throughout their creation and launch to ensure their relevance, authenticity and reach
- Read the [AHRC Creative Communities Devolution Policy Provocation Papers](#)

Ready to learn more?

There are 4 Modules in the AHRC Creative Communities Toolkit – you can find them all on our website: www.creativecommunities.uk

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