

HOW TO CREATE A SUCCESSFUL COMMUNITY PROJECT

1. What is outreach?

Outreach has been defined differently by different groups, but for English Heritage, it has been broadly defined as work which actively engages new audiences in learning from, enjoying and valuing the historic environment.

2. Why do outreach?

- To meet the needs and priorities of external community groups
- To raise self-esteem and confidence, and stimulate creativity amongst participants
- To raise community expectations and educational attainment
- To teach new skills which can be sustained beyond the life of the project
- To build community cohesion and reduce social exclusion
- To work towards an enhanced sense of place and identity, increasing the value that communities place on their local environment and the sense of pride and ownership in the place where they live
- To enrich your organisation by challenging you to look at what you do, why and who for when faced with groups with different priorities and perspectives to your traditional audience.
- To enable people to understand the historic environment in a sustained and sustainable way to ensure its long-term future.

3. Defining your audience

English Heritage works with the DCMS definition of 'priority groups' for engagement with the historic environment. We also take as priority groups the audiences defined by the Heritage Lottery Fund as 'missing' from the built environment:

DCMS priority groups	Young people, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, people on low incomes.
HLF 'missing' audiences	Teenagers, older people, people without cars, unemployed people.

4. Working with communities

Working with communities is rewarding for both yourself and them. But there are some issues to think about before you start. Ask yourself why you are trying to run a project that engages a particular community – to fulfil funding criteria, to meet your own agenda or to fulfil a real need as identified by that community?

It is vital that projects are developed in collaboration with the participating communities to meet their needs. It is bad practice to 'parachute' an outreach worker into a community with a ready-defined project, without consulting the community about what their needs are and how you can best meet them.

It is worth bearing in mind that you will have to be flexible in your approach. Outreach projects change throughout their life, but making sure you stay in regular contact with all the parties involved should allow you to remain responsive. The outcomes of any community based project are impossible to predict exactly – and are exciting for this reason – therefore keep the project design flexible enough from its inception to be able to cope with the unexpected incidents that are bound to arise during the project.

5. How do you set up a project?

To create a project, you need a good plan to start with, with an appropriate and deliverable methodology. Outlined below are headings against which to work:

<i>Proposition</i>	A brief overview of what the project is all about.
<i>Objectives</i>	<p>What are you trying to achieve? For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To increase awareness of the archaeology in area - To engage local young people in an arts-based project relating to the historic environment - To tackle issues of social exclusion and rural isolation in area.
<i>Target audience</i>	<p>Who are you doing this for? Your audience will dictate how the project looks, from the methodology, to where it takes place, to how it is evaluated. Try and be specific – it is important to target an audience rather than having a general drop in or only a vague notion of who you are aiming at, such as young people. Specific audiences include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - young people from a youth club in a particular locality, - year 4 & 5 school children, - elderly residents in sheltered accommodation. <p>You will have to think about how you actually engage these groups in the first place, so keep your target realistic.</p>
<i>Methodology</i>	What steps are you going to go through to achieve the outcomes?
<i>Outcomes</i>	<p>What measurable outcomes will result from the work? These can include hard and soft outcomes. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exhibition of artwork created by participants - Publication - 20 people taken on guided tour of local heritage sites - 5 young people trained as guides for local heritage sites. - New skills acquired by participants, including excavating & finds processing. - Increased confidence and creativity amongst participants, and increased appreciation of local historic environment.
<i>Evaluation</i>	How will you measure whether the project has been a success? See 'Evaluation' section below for more info.
<i>Time-scale</i>	Key dates in the process, including start and finish dates, key milestones during project. Its important to have a deadline that everyone has agreed to that you can aim for.
<i>Budget</i>	<p>Try to make this as comprehensive as possible. Elements you might have to cost include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Artists / community worker / consultancy fees - Materials and equipment - Workshop space hire - Exhibition or publication costs, depending on your project - Photographer to record the project - Publicity and marketing - Contingency – 5-10% of the total budget cost is usual.

6. Evaluation

Evaluation of outreach projects will include 5 stages:

1. Planning
2. Collecting Evidence
3. Assembling and Interpreting
4. Reflecting and moving forward
5. Reporting and Sharing

It will include both quantitative evidence – number of people taking part etc as well as qualitative evidence, which will give more of a sense of what happened, a judgment on the quality of the project and the soft outcomes, such as increased confidence and self-esteem or ability to work with others.

Ways of collecting evidence for the evaluation process can include:

- Questionnaires
- Comment boxes
- Interviews
- Written diaries
- Small group discussions
- Graffiti walls
- Photography / video
- Drawings and diagrams
- Tape Recordings
- Observation
- Final performance or display of work made during the project
- Participatory Techniques – Drama based activities and games can help you collect evidence from those taking part in informal and enjoyable ways. Techniques can be as simple as asking people to show interest by raising their hands or more complicated role-playing such as putting the project leader in the “hot seat” to be questioned by the group.

7. Sustainability

It is important to think about sustainability. If your project has a limited life-span, what can you put in place so that it can have benefits after your involvement has ended? Here you could think about:

- training participants up so they have skills that can be used after the project is over
- enabling people to set up a local society or amenity group so they can continue to look at issues that were raised during the project
- pointing the group towards further funding sources to continue work
- enabling people to set up networks where they can act as mentors for other groups who want to carry out similar work, thereby sharing skills amongst peer groups.

8. Funding

There are many funding streams you can apply to. They will all have different priorities, so its worth discussing your project ideas with each organisation before applying.

For example:

- *Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund*: dispersed by English Heritage, keen to fund community projects which focus on archaeology and heritage
- *Heritage Lottery Fund: Awards For All* - £500 to £5k. Local Heritage Initiative – £3k to £25k. Young Roots – £3k to £25k, targeting 13 to 20 years olds
- *Government Initiatives*, including Community Fund: funds community based projects. New Opportunity Fund: community projects based around education, health and the environment. Learning and Skills Council – funds Basic Skills and Family Learning projects.
- *Engage*: offers small funds for projects which engage with museums, galleries and archives.
- *Arts Council England*: may fund arts-based community projects
- *Charities and Foundations*: too many to mention! List includes: Paul Hamlyn Foundation: for arts/education projects which work with young people at risk of social exclusion. The Baring Foundation: community arts and education projects. Lloyds TSB Foundation: projects which work with disabled people and socially excluded groups. Carnegie UK Trust: funding for communities and creativity.

9. Some examples of project types

Walks and talks enable you to share information with your audience, but participants are passive. You are unlikely to be actively involving them in the event.

Instead, why not think about:

- *Creating a heritage trail*: work with local community groups to create a trail of places they have identified as being of local interest or importance. Think about encouraging people to think about places of significance to them, as well as obvious civic or religious buildings. Groups can research these places and create a leaflet or give guided walks to local community and general public. A good additional element to this could be to set up a training scheme for local young people to become guides for the trail.
- *Arts-based project*: think about using an element of the historic environment or archaeology, or general themes, such as memory, place or identity, to inspire art work / drama / dance / poetry. This could lead to a publication, a performance or an exhibition of artwork created by participants in local public space (such as village halls, libraries, supermarkets).
- *Reminiscence work*: This is a great way of working with older people to record their memories and stories. It can be tied into a project looking at how an area might have changed over time. It could also have an intergenerational element where young people are skilled up to record the oral histories with the older members of their community.
- *National schemes*: think about tying your project into national schemes. For example: National Archaeology Days (organised by the Council for British Archaeology), Heritage Open Days (Organised by the Civic Trust).