Great Place Scheme evaluation (England)

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The Great Place Scheme is piloting new approaches to putting culture at the heart of communities and local policy-making.

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PDF Gweld Great Place Scheme England Year Two Evaluation Report as PDF(956.18 KB)	956.18 KB
PDF Gweld Great Place Scheme England Year One Evaluation Report as PDF(1.5 MB)	1.5 MB

About the Great Place Scheme

The Great Place Scheme (England) is a joint initiative between The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England. The scheme has been running since 2017 and is investing in 16 places across the country.

It is enabling cultural and heritage organisations to make a step-change in how they work together, and with other organisations in other sectors, in order that arts, culture and heritage contribute more to meeting local social and economic objectives.

About these reports

Evaluating the Great Place Scheme has been a key part of our plans from the start. The reports will explore three overarching questions:

1. How best to re-position culture in local decision-making, planning and delivery?
2. Do new approaches lead to improved social, economic and cultural outcomes for local partners?
3. How do The National Lottery Heritage Fund and Arts Council England work together to support these new approaches in future?

You can read about the evaluation logic model and how the methodology incorporates the ambitions driving the projects in the full reports, downloadable as pdfs on this page.

Year two evaluation report – key findings

Projects are successfully engaging communities

All of the 16 areas granted funding have continued to deliver their projects in line with the Great Place scheme aims. The majority of these have now requested project extensions in order to allow for better quality of delivery.

Nearly 1,300 public-facing events have been delivered across the programme reaching an above-average proportion of people from lower socio-economic groups.

A focus on organisational resilience, project legacy and boosting tourism

Projects are highly focused on the project end point and thinking practically and strategically about legacy. Concerns with sustaining relationships, networks and ways of working are driving new thinking about organisational models, capacity building and plans for large-scale legacy projects.

Organisations are looking to continue the work of the Great Places through embedding skills, relationships and habits of practice rather than relying on possible future funding.

Economic delivery outcomes relate to the Great Place area as a whole, and are focused on cultural tourism: to Great Place sites and events in the immediate term, and with a legacy for the relevant areas as a whole in the short-to-medium term.

Community empowerment is key

Projects are addressing social issues in their area through empowering people as decision makers both about and through culture.

Projects considered cultural activities themselves as community empowerment, through their development of pride and a sense of place or identity.

Partnerships are blossoming

There has been a rise in the number of Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and university partnerships.

Cross-portfolio, cross-sector partnership and working is significantly improved and extended.

Some challenges remain

Workload continues to be the biggest barrier to establishing partnerships or making change – for both of the project teams and the organisations they need to engage with.

Other significant challenges are a lack of local leadership, skills gaps and lack of suitable evidence.

While some participation objectives have been met, projects have found certain groups more difficult to engage than others.

Year one evaluation report – key findings

The report presents four case studies selected to provide a variety of different governance models and local area contexts. It also presents three counterfactual case studies looking at projects that did not achieve Great Place funding.

The general direction of travel is good. Inevitably the first year for most of the projects was about getting staff and systems in place for delivery of work in subsequent years.

With this phase completed, evaluation reports for the second and third years will provide more information on the work done and the difference the programme is making.

Overall we are pleased with progress made so far in what is a unique and ambitious partnership that is seeking to transform places by putting culture front and centre of local strategy and planning in a wide variety of areas.