

How collaboration can help deliver better heritage projects

Running effective cohort events

The majority of cohort activity will take place through facilitated events. These can range from regular, short catch-ups, such as informal coffee chats and weekly check-ins, to less frequent half-day or full-day events, such as themed workshops, webinars or retreats.

Events should be defined based on cohort needs, but cohort coordinators should aim to:

- **Set clear objectives for sessions** to make best use of participants' time. This can include objectives for formal sessions, as well as allocating time for unstructured discussions and networking.
- **Set aside dates for training and conferences** as far in advance as possible to avoid diary clashes. Ask ahead about grantees' priorities, challenges and questions and build these into the agenda.
- **Consider site visits** as an opportunity to inspire grantees through live case studies. Seeing innovative delivery in action can bring ideas to life and trigger possible applications elsewhere.
- **Ensure appropriate attendance** and consider whether the entire cohort needs to attend. Certain events may only be relevant to grantees of a particular size, location or subsector.
- **Make materials and recordings available online** for grantees. These can be referred back to and viewed by team members unable to attend, and by those who wish to review the materials.
- **Diversify locations** for in-person events away from major city centres to improve accessibility for grantees located less centrally.
- **Clearly communicate about financial support** available for events and training. Give participants confidence that cost need not be a barrier if supplementary funding is available.
- **Evaluate meetings and events** and monitor what works and for whom. Secure honest, constructive feedback to ensure meetings and events are valuable. Find out what could change to improve engagement and outcomes, and act on it.

Summary of recommendations

1. **Plan ahead and use time efficiently:** plan the programme as far in advance as possible and provide clarity on agendas and objectives.
2. **Create opportunities for connection:** plan a range of events, including regular check-ins, formal learning opportunities and inspirational site visits.
3. **Provide follow-up and wraparound materials:** consider attendance carefully and enable engagement in different ways by making materials available online.
4. **Prioritise accessibility and utility:** diversify locations and communicate clearly about financial support available to support access and engagement.
5. **Respond to and incorporate feedback:** seek honest feedback and adapt future sessions to address cohort needs.

Conclusion

Cohort working is an effective tool for enabling projects and programmes to come together and allowing collaboration and knowledge sharing to occur naturally.

The core of cohort working is collaboration, exchange and mutual support among a group of grantees. The aim is for a programme to generate impact that is greater than the sum of its parts, creating benefits that would not have been possible if grantees had delivered their projects in isolation.

Cohort working is not suited to every type of project. Its benefits can only be realised when grantees and funders are committed to it as a way of working. It can require greater investment of time and resources in its early stages, but the benefits can outweigh the costs when the approach is appropriate and implemented effectively.

Effective cohort working enables grantees to share knowledge, ideas and experiences in a collaborative setting, adding value to individual projects and the wider programme.

About this publication

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