



How to involve young people in heritage projects

A practical guide

October 2013

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1. Introduction

At the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), we use money from The National Lottery to support projects that make a lasting difference for heritage, people and communities. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of the UK's heritage.

And we're passionate about helping young people engage with it. There are benefits for everyone in inspiring young people to explore and enjoy their heritage. They bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to heritage projects, and in the years ahead they will be the ones who look after heritage and pass it on in their turn. For young people, involvement brings opportunities to develop new skills, interests and aspirations, to connect with their wider communities and have fun.

Young people can take part in projects funded under all our grant programmes. We also have a dedicated grant programme, Young Roots, that gives young people aged 11 to 25 the chance to plan and deliver their own heritage projects, as research shows us we're least likely to engage with heritage at that age.

This guidance draws on the experience we've gained since launching Young Roots in 2001 and on feedback and evaluation from the projects we fund.

1.1 Who is the guidance for?

It's for anyone planning to work with young people on a heritage project. Whether you are a curator, wildlife officer, youth worker or a young person yourself, this information should help you develop a heritage project that successfully engages young people.

1.2 Practical tips

Our evaluation of the Young Roots programme shows that the following six elements are key to involving young people successfully. Over the following pages you'll find practical tips that will help you achieve these:

- Let young people take the lead
- Provide hands-on, creative activities
- Tell young people what skills they could learn
- Recognise their achievements
- Forge a partnership between youth and heritage organisations
- Involve an experienced youth worker or teaching professional

2. Sparking interest

2.1 What is heritage?

"At school we just do Victorians and Egyptians. We've never talked about where we live and how we fit in."

Heritage includes many different things from the past that we value and want to pass on to future generations.

It could be people's memories and experiences, community history, cultural traditions, or the history of languages and dialects. Or it could be something physical, like historic buildings and streets, archaeological sites, museum collections, the countryside, habitats and species, parks and cemeteries, or places and objects linked to our industrial, maritime and transport history.

Young people often have a limited understanding of what heritage can be, and think that 'It's not for me'. Helping young people understand the word 'heritage' in their own terms is an important first step in getting them involved.

2.2 Relating heritage to real lives

Making heritage relevant to the here and now is vital to engaging young people. A focus on cultural identity or the individuals and events that shaped their communities is often appealing, and relating to others can be easy. For example, comparing the lives of teenagers now and a century ago could lead to an interest in the history of fashion, politics or culture.

Successful projects often draw on young people's existing interests, such as photography, music, sport or science. Local projects can be connected with global issues concerning young people, such as climate change.

While culture and memories might appeal more readily to young people, historic buildings, landscapes, and other physical sites or collections can also be exciting. Explore the stories behind places and objects, and introduce the potential for hands-on experience.

2.3 Defining heritage for themselves

With some encouragement, your group will be able to share their own ideas about heritage and identify what they would like to investigate. They may not even realise that their interests have a heritage connection.

Simple word-association exercises (see examples overleaf) can help young people to define their heritage, basically asking 'what is your heritage?', and 'what does it mean to you?'

*"The young people felt that they were a part of heritage and it was not just something from years ago." **Grantee***

Activity one: Heritage trees

- Draw a tree trunk on flipchart paper, with two branches.
- On the branches write two words associated with heritage (see the list of heritage areas above for some handy examples).

- In small groups, get young people to complete a word-association exercise based on the two heritage words.
- In theory every new word would lead to two or three new suggestions, developing the branches of the tree.

Heritage shields

- Give each person a piece of paper and a pen, and ask them to draw a shield divided into four sections.
- Drawing or writing something in each section, ask each group member to identify:
 - something they like doing;
 - something that represents who they are;
 - something that represents where they live;
 - something that is important to their family.

2.4 Hands-on, creative activities

Young people respond well to practical and creative activities. Opportunities to try different skills and tasks or learn more about their local area will help to engage them.

Getting a taste for it

No one likes jumping into the unknown. To reduce fears of being asked to commit to something uncertain, organise some 'taster' activities. These can enable young people to try something out and make an informed decision about whether or not a project or activity is of interest or right for them.

Organise site visits

One of the fun things about any heritage project is getting out and about. A site visit can inform young people about a project idea or theme, helping them to get a feel for the task at hand and develop an enthusiasm for it.

- After a visit, you could ask participants to consider the following:
- What did I find most interesting/appealing/surprising/disappointing?
- What would I like to find out more about?
- How could the site appeal more to young people?

Visits can also help to counter young people's fear that they might receive a negative reception or not be welcomed at heritage sites.

2.5 Highlighting the benefits

Skills

Show the young people what's in it for them. Providing them with experience that will enhance their CVs can be a huge incentive to take part. In discussing potential projects, stress the transferable skills they can pick up to help prepare them for employment and continuing education. These could range from communication, budgeting and team-working to research and public speaking.

Recognising achievements

The skills and experiences young people gain from taking part in a project will be useful for them in other contexts, and the best work with young people recognises their achievements. This can range from informal acknowledgements to accredited awards and qualifications.

There is a wide variety of local and national awards and qualifications that can be partly or wholly achieved as part of a heritage project. The award scheme you choose will depend on the nature of your project, the starting point of the young people, their motivation, and the aims of their participation.

This is just a sample selection of accreditations and awards, so don't feel constrained:

- Arts Award – www.artsaward.org.uk
- A range of entry-level ASDAN awards such as volunteering – www.asdan.org.uk
- Duke of Edinburgh Award – www.dofe.org
- John Muir Award – www.jmt.org
- National Open College Network qualifications, including Leadership in Youth Work for Young People – www.nocn.org.uk
- Youth Achievement Awards – www.youthachievementawards.org

Top tips

- Heritage can be many different things, and defining 'heritage' for themselves is key to involving young people.
- Young people often engage better when they can see the links between heritage and their own lives.
- Provide hands-on, creative activities to help introduce young people to heritage.
- Skills and awards can be an incentive to take part.

3. Developing a heritage project

The first steps in planning your project involve making decisions about the heritage theme, the outcomes you want to achieve and the activities young people will engage in. You can then start to address the basic details around time, venue, roles and costs. Make the project as accessible as possible and budget for transport, refreshments, and so on.

Young people should be involved in all aspects of a heritage project, from planning what to put in the funding application to evaluating the success of the project in meeting its objectives.

3.1 Give young people the chance to take the lead

"We all came up with what we wanted to do and when we had to do it."

Enabling young people to lead projects, or have a significant say in matters, is good practice and can be key to the project's success. This can help them feel like equal partners, and the power to make their own decisions can instil a sense of responsibility and ownership of the project. Ideally they should be involved from the start of the planning process so that project development is done with them, not for them. Sometimes young people move on, and you may need to involve different young people throughout the delivery of your project.

Supporting leadership skills

*"A fantastic project... Our young people all want to learn about the skills of their ancestors." **Grantee***

The young people will need training and support to develop the skills necessary to lead the project. Some of them will be able to have a strong role from the start, while others may need to ease into a managing position. Many projects involve young people at different levels, for example with a small number of them sitting on a steering group.

What if it's not appropriate for the young people to take the lead?

For some groups, taking part and maintaining involvement is a big achievement in itself. Where young people are not at a stage where they might take a leading role, they should be consulted and involved as much as possible, including in the planning of the project.

3.2 What can your project be about?

Here are just a few examples of the sort of things young people have explored or been involved in as part of HLF-funded projects.

- Helping to conserve ancient woodland
- Repairing dry stone walls
- Recording the changing experiences of deaf people in the UK
- Creating an architecture trail

- Researching traditional dance
- Learning to sail historic boats and exploring local waterways
- Interviewing people about migration
- Creating an exhibition about a fashion era
- Investigating the origins of local superstitions
- Recreating a medieval feast
- Documenting the story of a housing estate
- Researching the impact of a key historic event
- Making a film about local villains
- Exploring the history of women's rights

Stay focused

Make sure you don't try to cover too much. If your group has a general topic, such as how a community has changed, they might want to set a specific time period to investigate (e.g. since the First World War), or use the years 1950, 1980 and 2010 as yardsticks.

3.3 Setting outcomes

It's important to know what you want your project to achieve and the difference you think it will make. When you apply to HLF you will need to tell us how your project will achieve our outcomes for people, heritage and communities. You can find out more at www.hlf.org.uk/outcomes

Identify where you or your group are starting from, and where you would like to be at the project's end. Your outcomes should set out the changes that will come about as a result of your investment of resources and time.

Be specific about your outcomes. If you state that young people will have changed their attitudes and/ or behaviour, describe the areas that will be influenced. For example, young people will have changed their opinion about the value of their park and spent time caring for it, or they will have increased confidence and be volunteering or actively seeking employment in new fields. Include some details about the starting point, and how the changes will be brought about.

Think about who will benefit from your project and how it can engage young people that may have had limited access to heritage before. Our projects have made a difference for a wide range of young people, including disabled and unemployed young people, and those excluded from mainstream education. Set outcomes that relate to the young people you are working with.

The activities undertaken through your project and any outputs created (such as a film, an exhibition, or a restored habitat) should link clearly to your outcomes. For example, if your intention is for young people to have developed skills, the project activities must include training and the opportunity to put this into practice.

3.4 Enjoyable activities

Incorporating activities that are already part of young people's lives – such as hobbies, sports, music and digital media – can help engage participants on their own terms. Above all, the activities and content of the project need to be fun, relevant and engaging.

Most projects will involve some kind of information or training. Try to use a variety of learning and research methods to appeal to a broad range of young people. It helps to separate project activities from the type of work associated with school. Consider how young people could:

- hear about their heritage (interview people about their memories, listen to traditional music and songs);
- taste heritage (host themed meals, prepare and taste traditional dishes);
- see heritage (visit buildings or national parks, experience 'behind the scenes');
- touch heritage (handle artefacts, complete conservation tasks);
- smell heritage (the smoke of a re-enactment battle, the grease in an old train shed or the smell of the sea).

A **spider diagram** might help you to plan

- your project activities.
- Place your project theme at the centre, e.g. a historic park.
- Draw legs highlighting what young people want to explore, e.g. conservation, landscape design, people and events, etc.
- Then, along the legs, record how they might find that information, e.g. oral history, surveys of plant species, site visits, etc.
- Choose which activities to include in the project.

"I didn't anticipate the project would be much fun, especially as it involved research. But we've done so many fun things, like going on visits and residential."

3.5 Planning and running the project

Below is a checklist of some of the main areas and practicalities involved in planning and running your project. You'll find information on all our grant programmes and how to apply on www.hlf.org.uk. Don't forget to get advice on your project idea from your local HLF office before you submit an application.

Project planning

- Identify the heritage theme of the project.
- Determine the outcomes you want to achieve.

- Select project activities and outputs.
- Set a timetable, including when you want to start and how long it will take.
- Decide where you are going to do your project.
- Consider when and how often your group of young people will meet.
- Consult with other young people.
- Approach project partners and establish what they can bring to the project.
- Outline the roles that everyone will have in the project.
- Research detailed costs (including equipment, staffing, training, activities and transport) and draft a project budget.

Project management and delivery

- Set up a project-management group.
- Recruit and motivate other young people as appropriate.
- Make sure project activities are accessible.
- Communicate regularly with any partners.
- Monitor project and amend project plan.

Project evaluation

- Build in evaluation from the start.
- Collate feedback from participants as the project progresses.
- Interview project beneficiaries.
- Produce a report on whether the project was a success and include any 'lessons learnt'.

Top tips

- We fund all sorts of heritage projects, and young people can get involved in anything from nature conservation through to archaeological digs.
- Think carefully about how you'll run the project – the time it will take, approaching partners, drafting a budget, recruiting young people, and so on.
- Focus on key themes; don't try to do too much.
- Make activities fun – they can involve music, practical conservation tasks, talking to people and much more.

4. Reaching further and leaving a legacy

The practice of archaeology can be an excellent way for people to learn about their heritage and to acquire new skills, such as surveying or excavation techniques. Also, it can often be a motivating factor for people to come together to explore their common history, to socialise, make new friends and have an enjoyable experience.

Once you have explored how to engage young people in your project, think about how to involve the wider community. This is particularly important if you want to sustain the work or ensure it reaches the widest possible audience. Sharing project work can also bring generations together, and help to counter bad press and the negative views of young people often held by others in their community. For example, young people could screen a film they made or guide community representatives such as councillors around a nature reserve they helped to improve.

4.1 Involving the wider community

Tell people what you plan to do: Share your plans and keep people up to date on your website, through social media, or by placing notices in local libraries, newspapers and community venues. Reach out to those not directly involved in the project through local organisations, or host a launch event for the community.

Involve people in activities: Encourage members of the community to share their own memories or memorabilia online, or by hosting reminiscence events. Involve local residents in oral-history interviews, or invite a local expert to talk to project participants.

Tell people what you have done: Give young people responsibility for generating media coverage of the project. With training, they could write press releases, create a blog or do radio interviews. Arrange a celebration event inviting key dignitaries, friends and family. Hold a premiere or unveiling of your exhibition, app, or restored garden or boat.

Leave a legacy: Deposit any final products (films, booklets, etc) with your local library or resource centre. Archive your research findings somewhere accessible, such as online or with your county records office. Share your evaluation with your funders and other heritage and youth organisations.

Top tips

- Use online and offline channels to spread the word about your project.
- Provide activities for everyone to get involved.
- Make sure your project is remembered through a film, exhibition or website that everyone can access and learn from.

5. Working with partners

5.1 What is a partnership and why do it?

A partnership involves two or more organisations with a shared ambition working together to achieve more effective outcomes than they could individually. Successful heritage projects engaging young people often feature at least one heritage and one youth-work partner working together.

Bringing youth-work practicality and credibility together with heritage-sector expertise and resources not only encourages young people to participate in a project, but ensures they get the most out of it. And there are benefits for the partners, too. Heritage organisations build their expertise and confidence in working with young people. In turn, youth groups discover how heritage projects can help them meet their core aims, and the benefits that engaging with heritage can bring for young people.

Even if it's not possible for a heritage organisation to establish a formal partnership, it will be useful to engage an individual youth worker or someone with relevant expertise to ensure good practice in working with young people. You should also consider training and support for staff that have little experience with youth audiences, especially if young participants are vulnerable or have challenging behaviour.

5.2 The role of partners

A heritage partner could bring:

- knowledge about the project theme, and guidance on research and sources of information;
- a site to explore and 'behind the scenes' access;
- support in research methods, e.g. recording oral-history interviews;
- advice on producing interpretation material;
- expertise in archiving research findings.

The youth partner could bring:

- a group of young people or experience in recruiting young people;
- experience in working with young people;
- ability to provide individual and group support;
- expertise in developing safe and accessible activities for young people;
- appropriate accreditation and recognition for the young people.

5.3 Steps to a successful partnership

Approach the right partner: Consider which organisations have the skills, knowledge or expertise appropriate for the type of work you are delivering, and find the most relevant person

to talk to. Try to speak to someone whose role covers the area you are interested in and who may have the authority to make decisions.

Present the benefits: Partnerships should be mutually beneficial. Before approaching a potential partner, do some research into their aims and priorities to see what benefits or opportunities your project may offer.

Clarity: All key players in the project must know from the beginning what the project aims are and how the outcomes will be achieved. Before talking to a potential partner, set out clearly what it is you think they can bring to the project and what you need from them in terms of input – time, resources etc.

Timetable: A timetable with clear milestones is essential. Share this with potential partners so that they get a better understanding of what you want to achieve and when.

Agreement: Formalise your partnership so that each organisation makes a commitment to the project and understands its role. This can be through a written agreement, a letter of support or a formal contract.

Communication: Keep in touch with partners regularly and inform them of progress.

5.4 Examples of heritage partners

There are many more than in this list, but typical partners have included:

- libraries, museums and galleries;
- community historians and local-history groups;
- archaeology groups;
- festivals and celebration groups, e.g. a carnival committee;
- historic houses, e.g. English Heritage and National Trust for Scotland properties;
- places of worship;
- environmental and conservation groups;
- oral-history groups;
- records offices, archives and media organisations;
- interest groups, such as heritage-railway, boating or photography clubs;
- Friends of a local park;
- heritage centres.

"We really enjoyed the archaeology dig. At first I was like, 'I'm not getting mucky', but I got into it and I've learnt how to trowel, and everything."

"The museums and libraries that we worked in partnership with have been so helpful, and realising there is so much material and knowledge just around the corner was fantastic." Grantee

5.5 Examples of youth-work partners

There's a huge range of possible partners, including:

- youth clubs – both statutory and voluntary groups;
- uniformed groups, e.g. Cadets, Scouts, Guides;
- schools (doing extracurricular work);
- Youth Councils and forums;
- Youth Offending Teams and Probation Services;
- youth volunteering groups, e.g. Youth Action Agencies, Millennium Volunteers;
- youth arts and theatre groups;
- Local Education Authorities, e.g. pupil-referral units, after-school groups, schools, colleges;
- Youth Support Services;
- Prince's Trust groups;
- faith-based youth clubs;
- identity or interest groups, e.g. Young Farmers, Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups, asylum seekers, sports projects.

Top tips

- Successful projects combine heritage skills and knowledge with youth-work experience.
- Pick a partner with the skills and expertise you need to carry out the project.
- Be clear about project aims, timetable and responsibilities.

6. Further reading

6.1 Resources

The following organisations provide a range of resources on working with young people, including developing participatory projects and involving young people in research and evaluation:

Big Lottery Fund

www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/research/children-and-young-people

National Children's Bureau

www.ncb.org.uk/resources

National Youth Agency

www.nya.org.uk

Participation Works

www.participationworks.org.uk/resources

UK Youth

www.ukyouth.org

6.2 Accreditation and awards

These organisations offer programmes and advice on accreditation and awards.

Arts Award www.artsaward.org.uk

ASDAN www.asdan.org.uk

Duke of Edinburgh www.dofe.org

NOCN www.nocn.org.uk

6.3 Child protection

The following links provide advice on safeguarding and child protection:

NSPCC

www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/briefings/writing-cp-policy_wda93825.html

Safe Network

www.safenetwork.org.uk/resources/Pages/policies_and_procedures.aspx

Disclosure and Barring Service (England and Wales)

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disclosure-and-barring-service/about

AccessNI (Northern Ireland)

www.dojni.gov.uk/accessni

Disclosure Scotland (Scotland)

www.disclosurescotland.co.uk

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Download this publication from www.hlf.org.uk