

## **Participation from the start**

One of the challenges  
with a large organisation  
which already has multiple stakeholders  
is that it can be  
very difficult to create space  
for community partners  
to have real agency  
in how the organisation functions  
and we believe one of the solutions  
is to involve community partners  
at the start of the process  
rather than later on  
because that allows them  
to shape what is happening  
rather than have to argue the case  
further down the line  
when they, the way the organisation  
impacts on it.

The ambition is to create a system  
where community partners  
influence the content  
and the products of the service.

But not to have that in a way  
which is dictated by professionals.

It's also to ensure  
that we're able to access

the wide demographic of  
communities within the city  
to get a changing perspective  
of the service over time  
which will reflect the changes  
in our population.

So it's a way of becoming responsive  
to the communities we serve.

The Creative Cafés aren't just about  
generating ideas for our public programme,  
it's about looking at new ways  
of working together  
in partnership with our communities.

Our intention is that a community partner  
could and would form part of  
the delivery team for a project.

The role within that team would depend on  
the interest and the expertise  
that people are bringing to it.

The process has gone well so far.

The first Café we had last year  
was very open and we generated  
a number of ideas from that.

A much wider range than we anticipated,  
not just programming ideas  
but other things that reflect  
how the service operates.

The second Creative Café,  
we were really conscious that  
if we simply repeated  
what we'd done in the first one  
that would be,  
that would feel dissatisfying if people  
had gone through that process before,  
they would want to have  
some sense of progress  
and we focused out on a smaller  
number of ideas of options  
just to try and get a bit more insight  
into those  
and that was also quite productive.  
Of around eight ideas that we'd  
refined from that discussion  
four are moving forward.  
Some ideas really in the end  
people thought they were  
being covered by activities in a service  
they weren't previously aware of.  
So there was no need to duplicate.  
Some of the community  
partners, just in the end,  
weren't particularly anxious  
to pursue them, for whatever reason  
and we weren't going

to drive them without them.

So the core ones where the people  
genuinely felt enthused have moved on.

We have two Creative Cafés a year.

The first in late spring  
and the second in the autumn,  
to fit in with our business  
planning processes.

And the first Café was to be a more creative,  
generative meeting  
and the second to firm things up.

However, we've discovered that  
if we have a theme  
then we can invite like-minded  
individuals along to the discussion  
and that's creating a community interest  
and creating a network.

It also means that we can use  
it as a mechanism to,  
to get some steer  
from creative partners  
about how they think we should react  
to these external pressures,  
to these external projects and themes  
that we're faced with.

One of themes was  
the use of built heritage in the city

to support tourism  
and economic development.  
So their insight into that topic  
was very valuable  
in helping to shape  
how we react to that particular objective.

For anyone else considering  
a programme of this type  
I think the important things  
that we found for us  
was that we needed to have  
that senior support,  
the support of a director  
in essence.

I think it's important that you  
understand how much of a  
struggle it'll be for some staff  
working on this programme  
and it doesn't need to be perfect  
in the beginning,  
you just need to start and  
the project can evolve over time.

It's important to have  
equal numbers of staff  
and community partners in the room.

No one voice overtaking the other.

To communicate the results

of the Café, if they give us their time

and they give us their intellectual

input that we are serious

about moving this forward.

It's very dangerous to set

extremely specific targets.

We've learned that we have to set targets

which are much more focused on

networks, relationships

and a joint sense of progress.

One of our community

partners reminded us

"It's not all about you."

They're right, it's not all about

Glasgow Museums.

It's the relationships that are forming

between our community partners

as a result of attending,

that are equally as important

as the relationships

they are establishing with us.

One of the important things

to remember,

and I've fallen into

the trap myself, many times, is

it's not a project,

it's a way of working

and it's a fundamental change.

It has to be something

that's sustainable,

it has to be something

that's been committed to

and it involves

feeding into all the ways of working

across the organisation.