

Cultural strategy in a box



Cover image:
Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth, Portsmouth City Council

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Introduction

Context

Culture is who we are. It is our heritage and future. It is how we live our lives and express our identities. It is art, music, film, fashion, design, even gaming. But it is much more: it is what defines us and how we are changing. For local authorities, culture can be viewed as part of the glue that brings and keeps our communities together. A strong cultural sector and enriching cultural life can contribute to welcoming, distinctive and attractive places. Used effectively, culture and the institutions and services of culture (museums, libraries, festivals and many other elements) can contribute toward the revitalisation of communities, the development of trust, improved health and wellbeing, and the possibility of a more positive future.

Many cultural services provided and supported by councils also deliver a set of social and economic outcomes. Culture provides the inspiration and talent pool that drives the creative and visitor economy. It can also contribute toward a more equitable and inclusive economy, where diverse talent is able to participate – with, for example, a role in place-making and as entrepreneurs in the creative industries. Places which establish a sustainable and critical mass of cultural excellence can also gain influence beyond local boundaries and even internationally – such as through events, festivals and heritage celebrations. This in turn can be impactful for inward investment, tourism and trade.

Many councils have sought to maximise the role of culture in their approaches to place, economy and society. They have produced cultural strategies to coordinate their approach and develop a shared vision

with residents and cultural partners. The recent Cultural Cities Enquiry endorsed this approach and further encouraged councils to develop ‘cultural compacts’ which are addressed further in this guide.

Yet many councils have limited resources to develop cultural strategies. The argument for developing a cultural strategy is also often caught in an ‘either / or’ discussion in relation to statutory investment priorities such as social care. This means too many councils have limited bandwidth to either make the case for a cultural strategy or to develop the tools to deliver one.

Where they do exist, cultural strategies have either been outsourced to existing social enterprises, charities, consultants, or written in house with the skills, knowledge and funding already in place to do so. In most cases, such cultural strategies have proved worthy investments, catalysing new types of partnership, engaging diverse communities into a wider civic conversation and leveraging additional public (and in some cases private) investment.

Having a cultural strategy in place as well as strategic partnerships with combined authorities or other independent cultural institutions increases the likelihood of securing larger amounts of funding, such as from Arts Council England. This is because those councils are seen as demonstrating a strategic commitment to culture and the role it can play for society. The inability to produce a cultural strategy for some councils not only results in a lack of a strategic cultural vision for the area, but also a lack of funding, which is already problematic against the challenging funding circumstances that most councils are currently facing.

About this guide

This guide gives key lessons and guidance in writing a cultural strategy that can be tailored to suit the needs of the local authority and its place. It draws on good practice examples from across England. When designed and delivered effectively, a cultural strategy can trigger social and economic outcomes that will enhance your place. This is because a cultural strategy is not just a product, it is a process: of inclusion, new types of dialogue, and the creative re-imagining of what makes a place distinctive. It can enhance opportunities to engage with local communities and create healthier neighbourhoods, as well as unlock different types of investment and bring together different types of activity under a unified goal for the future of the area.

It is important to note that because all councils are different, have different challenges, different needs and a different asset bases available to them, the methods for developing a cultural strategy will vary by location. Each council also has a different political make up and as this is subject to change, it will introduce different values and commitments to culture. Furthermore, each local authority is operating within a wider strategic and partnership context, for example working with local enterprise partnerships, universities, business improvement districts and a range of other stakeholders. All these guarantee that the entry point for councils developing a cultural strategy will be different and this should all be considered when developing your cultural strategy.

This document provides guidelines to follow and points to note when developing and then writing a strategy specific to your local area. This guide can be used by different types of councils; urban and rural, unitary, county and district.

‘The strategy has given the sector a shared language – accommodating art form and place-based diversity. It has opened up investment and built shared opportunities for our local area.’

Tony Witton

Head of Culture, Kent County Council

Establishing a methodology

Introduction

It is important to have a clear research plan and methodology which will provide the information you will need to write your cultural strategy. The process of research and consultation is as important as the written form cultural strategy. Most methodologies and approaches to writing a strategy are conducted over 6-12 months. This is to give every opportunity for information to be accessed and for engagement to genuinely reach different stakeholders. It is important not to exclude key stakeholders in favour of a faster process.

The adjacent flow diagram is a suggested road map for the methodology of your cultural strategy. Each stage is explained in full in the following pages.



Why a cultural strategy

Defining culture

Culture should be seen as not only the commissioning of arts and the production of events, but also as a tool; that builds upon the heritage of the area; that builds a shared vision and identity for the area that is steeped in history and has a wealth of cultural assets; that builds the local economy particularly in the context of tourism and creative industries; that improves the local quality of life and encourages engagement in community activities; and that provides new ways of tackling challenges around health and well-being.

This understanding of culture will define your cultural strategy and will help to show a comprehensive understanding of the social and economic impact a cultural strategy can have.

Understanding the challenges

To develop your cultural strategy, it is important to understand the social and/or economic challenges your area faces, and which of these might be tackled by using culture as a tool. This may include environmental sustainability, social inclusion and mobility, health and well-being, and inclusive growth. The cultural strategy should be set within the context of the area's economic growth ambitions and alongside the aims of existing area-wide strategies and within the wider policy context.

The partnership approach

Steering groups

An early stage step in developing a cultural strategy is to establish a steering or partnership group. Often this is self-defined because such a group already exists or because a group of stakeholders have come together to co-invest in the strategy. The steering group or partnership group often includes the lead council officer for culture and relevant colleagues in other departments; the portfolio holder for culture; key cultural institutions; education institutions such as a university or college; creative enterprises and partners in health and social sectors. This is to establish culture as a shared strategic agenda and to ensure there is a dedicated team overseeing the production and delivery of the cultural strategy. The establishment of this group may be based on a shared recognition of a need for a cultural strategy and the development of shared goals and agendas, which is often linked to potential funding.

It is important however, to ensure the steering group or 'cultural partnership' does have these shared goals at the outset. Partnership without strategic alignment can slow down and / or reduce the quality and leverage of a cultural strategy. If some stakeholders are not yet 'bought in' to the rationale for a cultural strategy, do not bring them into the steering group in the first instance. Instead utilise the cultural strategy process to build trust and enable them to understand how culture can deliver impacts for their specific agenda.

One of the key initial tasks for the steering group will be to establish its own terms of reference and agree chairing arrangements and approaches to internal and external communication. The steering group will then lead (or have a sub-group) which drafts the brief, method and desired outcomes of the cultural strategy. At this point, it is important to set out what ideal expertise you need within the cultural strategy team – for example local knowledge, cultural expertise, good communication and engagement skills, an awareness of next and best practice.

The skills mix of any consultancy or research team will depend on the strategic position of culture – eg how it can be embedded into the various council departments and policies, and how it can be aligned with related strategies such as for tourism or sports.

'We needed to create a partnership board which was cross-sectoral to maximise influence and avoid the council taking the lead'

Polly Hamilton

Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism,
Rotherham Council

Strategy for Bristol Culture

'This cultural strategy draws on extensive research and has been led and supported by a steering group, membership of which includes representatives of Bristol City Council (staff and elected members), Wesport, VOSCUR, Watershed, Bristol Cultural Development Partnership and a sample of people drawn from Bristol's professional creative community.'

The steering group will also need to initiate a process of partnership and asset-mapping to help brief any incoming consultancy / research team and to ensure the role and value of the cultural strategy is understood in terms of its potential impact for certain stakeholders and communities. This is often understood as the 'cultural ecosystem' – those people and bodies who are set to gain from a strong and focused cultural strategy. This includes cultural organisations and venues, artists and creative businesses, faith groups, youth services, local charities, voluntary sector, sports and other relevant interest groups, universities and colleges. Some of these stakeholders may form part of the steering group; others will be vital consultees and gatekeepers.

‘Collaborative working with partners locally, across the Liverpool City Region and beyond was instrumental in developing an ambitious Wirral Borough of Culture programme that engaged others, delivered significant outcomes and will leave a strong legacy for future years.’

Jane Morgan

Senior Manager: Culture, Wirral Borough Council

Cultural compacts

In early 2019 the UK Cultural Cities Enquiry (CCE) reported on how cities could create new development opportunities through investing in arts and culture and allow more people to feel the social and economic impact of culture in their lives. One core CCE recommendation was the development of a cultural compact: an effective place-based partnership structure that seeks to enable places to take full advantage of their cultural resources, embed them within wider local and national strategic development plans, and contribute to inclusive growth.

A cultural compact is a strategic cross-sector partnership that is driven by a shared ambition for culture and place. This ambition links arts and culture with broader strategic plans for local social and economic development. These partnerships seek to bring together local authorities, businesses, education providers, cultural and community leaders, to co-design and consult upon a vision for the role of culture within a place and deliver against shared priorities.

The strategic capacity of these partnerships relies on their ability to gather key local stakeholders across different sectors that are relevant to the compact's ambitions. A compact structure enables partners to join capacity and leverage existing and new resources to strengthen the local cultural ecosystem and deliver the changes they have

set out to accomplish.

There are currently 20 cultural compacts currently being implemented across England. These new ‘super partnerships’ will play a formative role in the next generation of cultural strategies. They also, through their cross-sector and inter-departmental attributes, can play a role in testing how such partnerships work for councils which have not yet set up a compact model.

Arts Council England area councils

It is good practice to build a relationship with your area council member for Arts Council England if available. They have expertise and grassroots knowledge of local issues that are drawn from different roles across and beyond the arts and culture sector. They include practitioners, arts administrators and local authority representatives. Area councils also make decisions on applications up to a certain threshold (currently £800,000 a year) to join the national portfolio in their area and make recommendations to National Council on grants of over a certain threshold (currently £800,000 a year) to organisations applying to join the national portfolio.

Brief development and commissioning

Outsourcing

Many cultural strategies are outsourced to expert consultants or cultural charities. If resources are available to you, it could be beneficial to work with such agencies to develop the strategy. This is because they will bring a track record in place-based cultural strategies and will have developed a suite of effective engagement, mapping and strategic analysis tools. However, there are examples of effective strategies developed by in-house teams. The crucial element is that resources are adequate to develop in-depth asset mapping, deep and diverse engagement, and effective partnership development. Too often, small budgets facilitate quick-fix consultancy which does not enable the development of an effective and inclusive cultural strategy.

Some councils are looking to other or complementary approaches to the standard 'consultancy and research model'. This includes the use of digital technology to crowd-source ideas and generate feedback to emergent cultural strategy themes. For example, the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Cultural Enquiry utilised a blog and social media throughout and solicited written submissions via these platforms as a key generator of feedback and to crowd-source priorities and ideas. It also includes commissioning arts and cultural organisations to drive the strategic consultation process, often using creative tools.

Baseline asset mapping and literature review

Asset mapping

Every local authority area starts from a different base in terms of cultural infrastructure and existing activities, so the most appropriate approach will depend on a baseline understanding of these strengths and weaknesses.

An audit of existing cultural assets should be undertaken or updated if a database and map of area assets exists. Councils should already be aware of key assets such as museums or libraries, but it is important to note those other less visible spaces that have the potential for involvement in the strategy. These could be vacant spaces for meanwhile use, sports facilities, theatre spaces, art galleries, rehearsal studios, cinemas and outdoor spaces such as parks. It is also important to map and understand the heritage assets of a place – both tangible (eg buildings) and intangible (eg music, craft, food).

In some cases, such as in the Southwark Cultural Strategy, the asset mapping has been included and published in the public cultural strategy document as a clear easy-to-use annotated map. It is beneficial for both local residents and visitors to have access to a public map of available activities and where they are located.

As well as understanding the asset base, councillors should also use this information to understand the current cultural offer of the area and how it contributes to the local economy. Data should be obtained from key assets that details the number of visitors, annual profit, employee numbers and any other important information that gives an indication of the current cultural offer in the context of the local economy. This can then be built upon within the cultural strategy, with the potential of each asset assessed and maximised.

If your council is part of the One Public Estate programme, then your local coordinator will be able to give you significant insight into your local assets, across a variety of landowners, and their associated management plan.

Literature review

Typically, cultural strategies that detail their methodologies carry out extensive literature reviews as part of their baseline analysis, with a focus particularly on the importance of culture, and other examples of cultural strategies. This guide points to many cultural strategies as good examples to follow when writing your own cultural strategy, however it is crucial to remember that each strategy is contextual, and some themes and priorities will not relate to your own. A list of further documents on the importance of culture and cultural strategies that should be included in your literature review can be found in the 'Further Reading' section.

Joint cultural needs analysis

Arts Council England (ACE) is developing guidance to help local authorities, cultural organisations, stakeholders and communities in local areas undertake a 'joint cultural needs assessment', building on the experience of joint strategic needs assessments, and applying an evidence based approach to cultural planning in place. The guidance has been developed in partnership with Coventry City of Culture Trust and Warwick Business School, and will be published in Summer 2020.

Consultation and engagement

Community consultation process

Community engagement is a key part of cultural strategy methodologies. It is important to have input from a diverse range of local communities at an early stage, for co-creation purposes as well as the opportunity to harvest local ideas and form new partnerships. It is as important to engage with residents who are not using the existing cultural offer, as it is to engage with those who regularly participate. The consultation phase is an opportunity to refine ideas, draw on the knowledge and skills of other partners and ultimately build consensus about needs and shared priorities. 'New Conversations', the Local Government Association (LGA)'s guide to engagement published in 2019, explores best practice, legal requirements, and the pre-emptive steps you can take to get engagement around decision-making right.

There are different ways of building the conversation through engagement. A good example of an innovative approach is the 'Creative People and Places' action research programme developed by Arts Council England, which engages local people with its projects as participants, decision-makers, artists, ambassadors, volunteers and of course audiences.

Innovative and original approaches can be tested and used to reach wider audiences. For example, involving young people might be more successful through using channels like night clubs or sports clubs as seen in Rochdale; the council have enlisted Rochdale Football Club as partners in the cultural strategy.

Holding public events and workshops is a good way to discuss the needs and opinions of local residents and ensure participation from a diverse group in an inclusive way. This will also establish a visible public presence of the consultation and space to test the vision and goals of the cultural strategy amongst the local community.

However, it should always be recognised that not all groups will participate in such events and when they do so, it can be from unequal positions: the most confident, connected and opinionated people often dominate the discussion. Key groups such as young people and minorities are often at risk of under-representation. This requires the development of other tools to reach different voices.

For example, an additional tactic for ensuring community participation is to conduct local surveys and e-surveys. This can be a valuable way of collecting local view points and ensures that each social or ethnic community is represented within the engagement process as you can target specific audiences and groups to gather respondents rather than relying purely on event attendance.

In addition to public discussion and surveys, local authorities often report holding 1-2-1 conversations with local stakeholders to gain a more in-depth understanding of the need as well as new ideas and possibilities. Stakeholders can include artists, businesses, universities and community activists.

Coventry cultural strategy

'Over the past two years there has been a number of consultation events that have reached over 500 people and organisations who are actively interested in the future of culture in the city. These include artists, young and older people, youth services, charities and support service providers. The consultation process produced new ideas for cultural growth that have been incorporated into the strategy. The strategy will be kept alive and fresh by regular evaluation and on-going consultation with residents and their representative organisations.'

Council consultation process

The cultural strategy should be aligned with council policy and embedded into other local authority departments. The first step in achieving this aim is to ensure culture is framed as delivering value across multiple agendas and in multiple departments. If culture is presented as issue based it will be more likely to be given a strategic role.

Forming cultural partnerships within your local authority will ensure culture is more effectively embedded. A good idea is to set up meetings with policy advisers and other departments and challenge them to talk about problems and issues they are facing that currently remain unresolved. For example, a cultural strategy can help to harvest solutions that reduce anti-social behaviour; or it can help shape a more compelling approach to high street and town centre renewal. A good cultural strategy process ignites new types of interdepartmental conversation via a 'whole place' approach to culture.

Typically, strategy documents within councils will follow a similar structure, and the cultural strategy should align and sit alongside other strategies and policies. Making sure strategies align gives other departments the opportunity to read and engage with the strategy before it is finalised, often leading to valuable input and extra local knowledge.

Strategies that will closely align with the cultural strategy include other arts strategies, environmental strategies, regeneration, transport and the visitor economy.

It is good practice to consider the roles of destination marketing organisations and the tourism sector more broadly within the cultural strategy. Planning policy, policies around economic growth, and the local plan should also be considered in line with the cultural strategy.

Benchmarking

Every place is different and has differences in terms of demographics and life chances of its citizens; these differences need to be understood at a whole-place and neighbourhood level. Where possible, asset mapping exercises should share sector definitions and measurement tools so you can benchmark your area with another area. It is also important to benchmark in terms of good practice approaches to culture – looking to other places to discover what worked and how they maximised their cultural resources across a wider strategic agenda. One approach here was in Bristol, where the cultural strategy involved a short international benchmarking exercise. This generated a suite of good practice examples which were then tested with partners via an international benchmarking workshop. This explored how Bristol differentiates, key strengths and where progress is needed.

Tunbridge Wells Cultural Strategy

'For many, culture is an avenue for civic participation and volunteering, allowing people to give something back to their community. Arts and cultural organisations thrive on volunteers, and many societies and 'Friends' organisations have been set up to support culture, with benefits for both the individuals who give their time and the cultural organisations they support.'



Rochdale Draft Cultural Strategy

Link for Life has used an informal group of councillors to write the strategy. This means the process of writing the strategy has been engaged with and embedded in the council from the start, as it includes the opinions and ideas of this group of councillors.

For the Cultural Enquiry in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP), the budget allowed each consultation workshop to involve at least one UK or international contributor to provide an overview of the approach to culture in their city and/or with regard to a specific theme (such as health and wellbeing). The contributor also played an active role as a critical adviser to partners in BCP as they shaped their strategic priorities.

There are also plenty of sources of good practice from which to benchmark. For example, Eurocities has developed a wide-ranging portfolio of case studies via the Culture for Cities and Region programme.

At a local level, consistent approaches to asset mapping and data collection also facilitate knowledge on the role of culture at a neighbourhood level. The more granular and local the data is, the more it will reveal, for example, cultural preferences and inequalities of access to culture.

Prioritisation and vision development

Priorities and themes

Many local authorities define key priorities and themes for the cultural strategy that typically build on existing ideas and priorities. The priorities are broad themes that will be used to achieve the defined vision. The priorities will also relate to the socio-economic challenges the area is facing, that can be innovatively tackled through culture. They should be inspiring yet manageable and achievable, such as Southwark Council's example 'Ensuring that the cultural needs of existing and new communities are met' (see full Southwark Borough case study on page 16). They might not be direct cultural goals, but goals that use culture to tackle a specific challenge such as climate change. You should also be able to show exactly how the priorities will be achieved in your action plan.

An iterative approach to developing priorities and testing with key stakeholders is helpful to develop the thinking about these issues as well as increase buy-in for the final strategy.

Vision

Once place-based research and a consultation process has been carried out, the resulting information can be used to write an overarching vision for the area. This should be a single clear sentence or very short paragraph at the beginning of the strategy that states the council's future goal for the area, achievable through the action plan in your cultural strategy. For example, if you find your challenges are around community engagement and participation, your vision might be 'an inclusive cultural offer where everyone is welcome and able to participate'. This section should also provide an overview of the current state and provision of culture in the area to contextualise the strategy, as well as providing a basis from which to state where you want to be in five or ten years time.

Action plan development

Defining activities and outputs

Part of writing the strategy should include defining a set of activities and outputs that will have a direct effect on the agreed outcomes. Example outputs include: programming ideas that are representative of people and place; co-creation and outreach events that target key people and places; training new voices and skills; interventions in key social issues. The scale and focus of the outputs will make the most creative use of local cultural capacity and the combined resources of any partnerships that are formed. The outputs should also be measurable in order to evaluate the process on a continuous basis. The themes that you may want to consider that surround these activities are outlined later in this guide. These activities and outputs are not necessarily included in the public cultural strategy document but are made visible through the management and delivery of the strategy.

Action plan

The action plan for the cultural strategy should ensure that the strategy is a process rather than a defined programme that completes after the given time period. It mobilises action and gives partners a means of monitoring progress and impact of the cultural strategy as well as specific events and activities that can be built upon or changed if the desired impact is not achieved.

In order to show how your vision and priorities are achievable, you will need to include an outline of your action plan in the public cultural strategy document that shows what will happen as part of your strategy and how, over the time period (usually five to ten years) in which the cultural strategy will be in place and operational. It is beneficial to clearly show the priority, the related activity that will help achieve the priority, and how you will measure the impact of that action (impact measurement is addressed later in the document under 'Management'). The Southwark Borough Council case study on page 16 gives a good example of this.

As well as a long term action plan, some local authorities outline an immediate action plan that directly follows the publication of the cultural strategy document in order to create momentum. For example, you may say there will be further community engagement to ensure maximum participation, or the formation of cultural partnerships and which organisations have been/will be approached.

Launch and roll out

Cultural strategies are never fully completed. The best ones act as a process, with the publishing of the strategy a key moment for reflection, partnership consolidation and a positive rallying cry for the future. They are, though, the culmination of an intensive and extensive process of engagement, visioning, mapping and prioritisation. Ideally, many people of diverse backgrounds will feel invested and committed.

They will have contributed to a set of shared priorities and they will have a sense of collective agency: that it is their strategy and that they are jointly responsible for its delivery and success. This is not to say the launch of the strategy is the moment the steering group gives up ownership of the process and calls on the cultural sector and other partners to take on the strategy – such as through the action plan. Rather, this is the moment the steering group sets out how it will work to deliver the priorities co-created by the people and how it will work with the people to do so.

Lowestoft Cultural Strategy, October 2019

The first Cultural Strategy for Lowestoft was launched at a 'Celebrating Culture on the Edge' event at the Seagull Theatre in Pakefield. One hundred local attendees heard from a series of guest speakers including Arts Council England, Historic England and Chief Executive of East Suffolk Council, Stephen Baker.

Review

The strategy should be a living document and therefore in a state of constant review. It is vital to know what is working and what is not in order to make necessary changes and maximise impact. It is as much of a learning process as a delivery process, and failure in some instances should be seen as necessary in order to succeed. Impact management is addressed further under the 'Management' section.

Southwark Borough Council

Southwark Council clearly outline three key priorities that their five year strategy will tackle as an introduction to their vision and plan for the local area. These are not the same as the socio-economic challenges the council faces, which are not included in their public strategy document, but were part of the production of the strategy. The three key priorities are:

- **Creative economy** – ensuring that Southwark continues to provide the right environment for the creative economy and enabling our residents to access opportunities for sustainable employment to support a strong, highly skilled local economy.
- **Creative growth** – ensuring that the cultural needs of existing and new communities are met, by retaining viable cultural organisations, and strategically developing cultural venues and creative workspaces.
- **Creative people** – ensuring that everyone has access to a high quality cultural offer regardless of their background, knowledge, skills, needs or experience.

We need to work with partners in an unprecedented co-operative approach to address both real and perceived barriers to participation to drive higher engagement.

Place-making and regeneration

Culture and place-making

Place-making refers to the role of arts, culture and heritage in helping to shape the places where we live and create a renewed social value. Place-making can help shape renewed affection, passion and pride for their 'place'. It draws on the combined assets of heritage, people, buildings and landscape to create places that people want to live in, work in, do business in and visit.



Peckham Levels, Southwark

Southwark Council transformed an underused multi-storey car park into a major cultural and creative hub and workspace which has led economic regeneration through the creation of over 450 jobs.

Culture can be used in this way to reassess tired streets, squares, buildings and civic spaces to increase their potential. It gives people the opportunity to connect their individual stories with collective narratives, helping to make their place feel like home. It also brings depth and meaning to people's experience of a place. In this regard, there has been a shift in the role of local authorities as providers of cultural services, towards thinking more about how communities operate, interact and develop as place-makers.

Cultural regeneration

Cultural strategies are often tasked with re-invigorating a place, by adding energy and creativity – eg to tired and failing high streets or neglected neighbourhoods. Care should be taken not to over-state the role and value of culture in the process of urban change; and care should also be taken to ensure regeneration is not a code word for 'gentrification' – ie where culture is a forerunner for developer capital which ultimately prices out the artists, cultural activities and even communities.

Care should be taken to align agendas in cultural development to the creative industries: arts and cultural activity is vital to the energy and competitiveness of the creative industries, not a pre-runner which can then move on once a creative cluster is formed.

The cultural industries, along with the visitor economy, account for over £200 billion of economic activity (LGA cultural regeneration). Cultural regeneration is about harnessing this value and using culture to drive sustainable and inclusive economic growth. It is not about high growth digital businesses attracted to an area because it was once culturally dynamic. Attracting these businesses can be desirable and a separate goal in its own right but should not be seen as a regeneration anchor.

Community

Introduction

Community engagement should be considered and continued beyond the development of the strategy into its delivery. This section looks at how other aspects of community engagement could be used in strategy delivery.

Community engagement

The strategy needs to involve people who know the culture of the place to maintain an ethnographic approach to delivery. Harnessing the different voices, experiences, talents and perspectives of a place will enrich the cultural offer and bring about innovative personal, social and civic growth. Involving only arts professionals would not give a broad enough perspective and might miss key relationships such as that between culture and sport.

Communities should be engaged as part of the delivery. This can be achieved through partnerships with cultural institutions who can engage the community through continued events, participation and learning. Local authorities should also seek to include the range of organisations consulted during the methodology stages as a group that can meet periodically to discuss the progress of the strategy, make any necessary amendments or improvements based on the impact, and generally feed into the delivery on a continuous basis.

It is helpful to think about groups in your area that might work differently, but always within some level of cultural engagement. For example, grassroots organisations are those who meet for creative activity such as knitting or paint clubs, see Arts Council England 'Creative People and Places' for good examples. Other examples include socially motivated charities who use culture to achieve social impact, and arts organisations that have social outcomes as their secondary impact.

Social value: services and networks

As part of the work in engaging with communities and working together, the council should seek to work with networks of organisations to reach those groups that would otherwise remain uninvolved, such as students or sports groups. This creates a shared vision and approach, as well as a sense of community cohesion. Engagement with these networks and infrastructures should be a continuous process.

Cultural experiences

The strategy should extend and open local residents' access to creative and cultural experiences or activities. It should highlight cultural experiences and opportunities that would not have been visible or available to local people prior to the strategy. This will help to make culture more visible in the area, and therefore more accessible and easier for more people to participate.



Rochdale District Council

Rochdale have created a role working within health departments and hospitals to understand how to embed culture. A creative approach to a health problem can be met by working with the cultural sector to help transform services. One example with proven success is matching young people suffering a mild mental illness (this programme would not work for those with a severe mental illness) with a sport or cultural activity such as art classes.

Co-producing and commissioning

Arts and cultural programming and leadership that is representative of the local community can reach out beyond traditional audiences, products and experiences.

Local authorities should work with communities to design and commission the cultural activities they want to participate in, as well as act as a reliable lead of the delivery programme. Embedding a co-production and co-commissioning approach to the cultural strategy will increase participation as well as local support of the strategy.

‘The task is to demonstrate to people the opportunity so that in the end, they don’t want to miss out.’

Sally Staples

Cultural Strategy Manager, East Sussex County Council

Culture and health and well-being

Culture can play a vital role in delivering positive outcomes for health and well-being. Culture is increasingly understood as providing value in preventative solutions (ie reducing the prospects of long-term health problems). Cultural prescribing is becoming better understood as a core service for healthy and happy communities. For example, loneliness, a key social challenge in many areas, can be reduced by engagement and participation in cultural activities.

The more physical challenges of health and well-being can be improved through access to dance classes or sport. The alignment of cultural strategies to agendas in health and well-being does introduce new opportunities for investment in culture – such as to build the capacity and expertise of the sector to deliver services in health and well-being.

However, care should be taken not to overly-instrumentalise the intrinsic value of culture and not to generate an imbalance between the demand for culture in preventative care and the capacity of the cultural sector to respond.

Inclusivity and inclusive growth

Inclusive growth is economic growth which benefits all segments of society and particularly those who are poorest and most disadvantaged. Behind the use of the term 'inclusive growth' is the notion that the distribution of the outcomes of economic growth is as important, if not more so, than the scale of economic growth. Inclusive growth will mean different things in different places, and places need to decide what it means within their local context.

Councils across the country are exploring how they can use local levers to catalyse economic growth which benefits all residents. There are a range of approaches local government is adopting to achieve its goals with local programmes seeking to 'create an inclusive economy', 'drive inclusive growth', support 'wealth creation' or spur on the 'thrive agenda.' Whilst each strategy differs depending on local circumstances, they share the same overall goal – that no one is cut off from the proceeds of growth.

Culture and the creative industries provide an excellent opportunity for innovators and entrepreneurs to identify and develop their skills, providing the space for flexibility, small scale start ups and cultural collectives. Without exposure to cultural and creative activity, many people may never discover their true talent or potential. The creative industries and creative economy are addressed further in the 'Economies' section of this guide.

Business and IP Centre Network

In 2010 the British Library began working with local authorities and library service providers to amplify the unique power of libraries as engines of innovation, economic growth and social mobility in the heart of diverse communities. Business & IP Centres now operate in town and city libraries across the UK as physical hubs where entrepreneurs and small businesses can come together to learn, network and access free and low-cost information and support in protecting and commercialising a business idea.

Of the Business & IP Centre users who went on to start a new business, 55 per cent were women (65 per cent in London), 31 per cent were from a black and Asian minority ethnic background (44 per cent in London) and 17 per cent had a disability. The network is reaching people who are underrepresented in business.

According to the latest figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy only 22 per cent of businesses are owned by women and only five per cent are owned by individuals of black, Asian and minority ethnic origin.

Democratising Entrepreneurship, British Library, 2019

Your cultural strategy should work to ensure that every person can develop and express their creativity throughout their lives.

It should make reference to a decline in inequality as part of the outcome and impact of the strategy. A key consideration or goal of the strategy should be to create a place where everyone, no matter what their background, has the same opportunity to engage in and benefit from cultural activity and through doing so enjoy a good quality of life. This could be through an offer of free events, establishing charities that offer free educational opportunities such as the West Sussex Music Trust exemplified, or through improved disabled access to all cultural venues in the area.

West Sussex Music Trust

'Back in 2013, West Sussex County Council took the bold step to embark on a project aimed at creating an independent, charitable organisation to continue the delivery of music education to the schools and children of West Sussex, and West Sussex Music was born. Suffice to say, the initiative has been a great success and I am hugely proud of where we are today.'

James Underwood

Chief Executive, West Sussex Music

West Sussex Music is the largest provider of high-quality music education to children and young people in West Sussex. Their 'whole-class first access programmes', instrumental and vocal lessons, ensemble activities, singing and community projects, instrument loan and wide-range of large-scale events benefit over 21,000 children across the county every year, who would otherwise be excluded due to a high cost in music tuition and instruments.

Every week during term time, in music centres across the county, children enjoy a wide range of musical activities including bands, choirs, orchestras as well as lessons and aural and theory classes. The Music Trust also offers teacher training and specialist advice and support for schools which helps them to achieve the best possible outcomes for pupils, their families and the community.

For over 50 years, the Trust has also supported projects that enable access to cultural opportunities for disadvantaged and disaffected young people through their strategic partnerships with other arts and cultural organisations and through their role as the Music Education Hub for West Sussex. They are a not-for-profit independent company, limited by guarantee with charitable status, and are funded by income from parents, schools and the National Music Grant, administered by Arts Council England.

Cultural assets

Introduction

Understanding your cultural asset base is a crucial part of the methodology when developing your cultural strategy. This section covers how to use those cultural assets in the strategy and delivery process and how to mobilise those assets. It is important to note that assets that might not be considered exceptional should still be nurtured and included as part of the strategy, as well as promoting key assets that will more easily build a narrative and identity. Both are important and count towards success. Initial cultural audits and partnership reach will begin the process of identifying existing strengths, undiscovered talent, new voices and spaces for arts and culture. It will also uncover areas and people in the city who have not had the opportunity to realise their potential. Mapping these visible, and untapped, assets is the vital foundation of maximising the strengths of a place.

Cultural buildings

Cultural buildings include clear examples such as museums, libraries, theatres, cinemas and performance studios, but they should also be considered more broadly and encompass buildings in which culture can either be consumed or produced, and that have meaning for the local community, such as local pubs with a live music offer, or community centres that host a community choir. The cultural offer of these buildings should be greatly built upon, as it is likely these buildings will be seen as anchor points for cultural activity by the local community and visitor economy.

The Met, Bury

The Met is a cultural venue in Bury that was named as one of the best small venues in the country having been the site of the famous Joy Division 'riot' gig. Bury has been named as Greater Manchester's inaugural Town of Culture in 2020.

Cultural spaces

As well as buildings, spaces such as public parks can be earmarked within the strategy as places that can host cultural events and activities.

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

The Witching Hour was a performance given in two parks in Wirral and Hull, commissioned by Wirral Borough of Culture 2019. The performance explored folklore from Birkenhead Park in Wirral and East Park in Hull. As it was delivered in spaces across two communities, the performance was not only transformational because of its setting but because it created such resonance between the two communities.

Heritage assets

Heritage assets can be physical assets, but can also be the history of a place, a local historical moment or event, or story from the past that local people strongly identify with. It might be that there is a distinct heritage asset in each area of your locality that can be celebrated individually and as part of a holistic approach for the entire area.

Rich heritage assets are fundamental to both culture and the visitor economy. Cultural strategies are often built on the power of heritage in unlocking stories and helping people to understand the area in which they are from. There is also the integration of buildings and conservation into these stories or histories.

Heritage spaces may already exist in your locality and may already be celebrated within the local heritage. The spaces should be re-imagined to not only create an identity of place but also to be used as key cultural venues that combine a celebration of both culture and heritage to create a strong identity. Civic buildings like town halls could fall into this category, as could old industrial heritage buildings such as disused factories, or religious buildings like chapels and churches. Piers can be important cultural venues in seaside towns.

‘The past is often not mobilised enough. We need to take history seriously, especially in cities with limited mobility where there is a subterranean memory of a place.’

Professor Franco Bianchini,
The Culture, Place and Policy Institute

Archaeology

Since the first local government archaeologists were appointed in the 1970s, progress has been made in projecting archaeology into the local planning process. This was emphasised by the publication of planning policy guidance in the 1990s which has led to an increase in demand for advice on archaeological issues at local level. Subsequent guidance has also emphasised the need for archaeological analysis and recording to play a full role in the understanding and management of historic buildings and the historic built environment. Archaeology should therefore be considered within your cultural strategy if relevant to the

area. Archaeological services within local government can also help to encourage the identification, management and promotion of archaeological sites and monuments, as well as promote awareness and understanding of the historic environment through education and outreach programmes. Identifying and celebrating these assets could contribute to the identity of the area.

Thinking about your archaeological and heritage assets can be particularly helpful where new estates or housing developments are being planned. They can provide a crucial sense of context and a ready-made hook for accelerating the growth of a sense of community. Many developers also report that linking new place and street names to historic features improves their ability to market new houses, and the speed with which they are sold.

Culture and meanwhile use

Meanwhile use is the use of vacant space for cultural gain whilst definitive plans for the space are finalised. This can be for as little as two weeks, up to a matter of years, depending on the context and ownership of the space. Meanwhile use unlocks underused space for the benefit of cultural activity, community cohesion, place-making and enterprise. It also transforms dilapidated or difficult buildings, into something that can be used for cultural purposes for a very low cost.

The Platform Project, Loughborough Junction May 2014 – June 2016

The Platform Project provided Loughborough Junction residents with an accessible space in which they could develop new creative businesses. The goal was to give entrepreneurs the opportunity to learn new skills and test ideas. Lambeth Council and Network Rail made available unused railway arches and a building for the project, which otherwise would have cost around £36,800 to rent.



Rochdale Borough Council

Rochdale cultural strategy includes the formation of a heritage action zone (HAZ).

The Rochdale HAZ is centred on Drake Street, the historic route from the railway station down to the town hall. The area originally developed as a commercial, cultural, social and civic focal point of the town and has strong connections to the Cooperative Movement. The HAZ engagement programme will aim to bring together local businesses and residents along with the wider community, in order to create a broader awareness of local heritage and provide support, opportunities and practical advice through various projects. These include a series of heritage workshops, an exciting mural project, an events programme for the street, heritage trails and several education projects.

'Rochdale's heritage offer is the key to our cultural strategy' – Janet Emsley, Head of Neighbourhoods, Community and Culture, Rochdale Borough Council

Economies

Introduction

Economies within the cultural strategy relate heavily to the notion of cultural regeneration, which uses culture to help grow the local economy.

Cultural skills

The cultural strategy should ensure that local residents and particularly children are able to develop creative and innovative skills by investing in educational opportunities within the cultural and education sector. It is important to make sure local residents are both aware of career opportunities and have the available pathways into the creative industries through varied educational and learning activities that are part of the wider delivery of the cultural strategy.

Waltham Forest Council

Walthamstow Creative Connections has sought to support local creative business growth and provide creative sector skills/ apprenticeships for individuals, especially young people.

Cultural growth

The cultural strategy should seek to harness and create opportunities to grow the local creative economy in an inclusive way. This could be through job opportunities in newly formed arts institutions or cultural organisations, increased participation in cultural events, as well as using the cultural offer to enhance the visitor economy.

The council should also seek to work with businesses as part of the cultural strategy to coordinate creative educational and training opportunities in the local area.

The Creative Industries Federation supports a creative careers programme to encourage new entrants to their sector. The offer includes speakers for schools, work experience opportunities, and enterprise advisers.

Day and night time economies

Culture should be seen as a large part of the evening and night time economies, as well as daytime activity. The strategy should ensure management of both economies and align the activities. Night clubs, bars and event spaces including live music venues are a huge part of the night time economy, but shops and buildings that lie empty at night could help maximise the cultural offer during the evening by hosting public art exhibitions, pop-up markets or performances. Parks, museums, libraries and town halls could also offer more at night, building on the success a number are already having by extending their opening hours.

Museums at Night festival

The Museums at Night festival sees museums, galleries and heritage sites across the UK open their doors for exciting evening events and spectacular night-time displays.

Purple Flag status

As a local councillor or place manager, finding ways to clearly distinguish your town and city centre's night time economy strengths could remain a challenge. The Purple Flag standard, launched in 2012, is an accreditation process similar to the Green Flag award for parks and the Blue Flag for beaches. It allows members of the public to quickly identify town & city centres that offer an entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable night out. Reinvigorated over the past three years by the Association of Town and City Management, there are now 70 Purple Flag towns and cities.

The creative economy

There is no single global definition of the 'creative economy' as it differs from place to place and from culture to culture. Successful creative businesses are often found clustered together in a particular neighbourhood or district, sometimes with a single building or business acting as a 'hub' at its centre. The success of the creative industries is dictated by the human talent that drives them as well as the social and cultural environment in which they are located.

Hubs are specific locations, usually a building or group of buildings, that provide affordable workspace, support and exhibition or sales space for creative entrepreneurs and acts as the central point of a wider network. Hubs may be as much places for social exchange and informal networking as they are places for doing business, and that is especially valuable for creative people who work on their own or in micro-businesses where their range of contacts and networks may be limited.

Creative clusters describe a group of related or mutually dependent businesses and resources that are grouped together in a neighbourhood or part of a city although, as noted above, the cluster may be a virtual network that is dependent on good internet connectivity rather than physical proximity.

Cultural organisations are often an active part of a creative cluster, sometimes as anchors or catalysts to a wider process of cultural regeneration and creative co-location.

Identifying hubs and clusters and working with them is a good way to support and enhance cultural activity in that area through the cultural strategy. This support can be realised in a variety of ways, but consider the following: establishing groups that can respond to the needs of the creative sector, improving the brokerage of available space for creative businesses whilst activating under used space, developing new approaches to improving creative careers, raising the profile and celebrating the range of creative businesses in the hub, and support artistic and site specific creative projects to showcase the diversity of local talent. If there aren't any hubs in your area, one goal of the strategy might be to re-purpose old buildings that can serve as creative studios, co-working spaces or other flexible uses, providing the basis of a cultural hub.

Creative Enterprise Zones

Creative Enterprise Zones are a new London Mayoral initiative to designate areas of London where artists and creative businesses can find permanent affordable space to work; are supported to start-up and grow; and where local people are helped to learn creative sector skills and find new jobs. To qualify as a Mayoral Creative Enterprise Zone, local authorities have demonstrated how they will provide the following:

Space: Permanent, affordable, creative workspace and live-work spaces at below market rents and ensuring no net loss of space

Skills and support: Building entrepreneurial skills and offering business support to artists, start-ups, sole traders, micro-sized and small businesses, developing career pathways and opportunities for progression into the creative industries and supporting sectors

Policy: Local plans with pro-culture policies in planning, housing, business development, technology and infrastructure, and supportive business rates policies

Community: Embedding creative production in communities, creating socially-inclusive places and strong links with education providers

Culture and high streets

High streets and town centres should be seen as key places for cultural activity, as they are often geographically central as well as perceived central meeting places for a community. High streets also provide opportunities for an inclusive economy, as well as skills growth and job opportunities as they feature a variety of creative workspaces as well as retail, including offices, workshops, yards and railway arches, usually located behind and above the immediate high street. Investing in cultural infrastructure on high streets will increase the potential for the creative economy to flourish in these places, but also work to create healthy high streets for more people to enjoy and visit.

Sheffield draft cultural assets strategy

‘Culture has played a starring role in Sheffield’s ongoing transformation. Cultural institutions and organisations of all sizes have been influential in giving Sheffield a scale and diversity of programming and experiences, improving the quality of place and increasing the attractiveness as a city to live in, work in, invest and visit. The city’s imaginative and distinctive public realm – its new squares and grey to green routes – has played a vital role as a cultural resource, connecting districts and encouraging people to gather and participate in Sheffield’s civic life.’

The creative and digital industries have also mobilised a new type of cultural economy and reinvigorated the city’s identity and sense of direction, with innovation, independence and making to the fore.

The Sheffield Cultural Consortium has played a very important role in connecting many of these assets and enabling coordination, shared planning and exchange. The Creative Guild has helped connect and amplify the city’s many makers and innovators. Cultural destinations programmes have helped increase the profile, coherence and allure of Sheffield as a place to visit. Now, with the launch of the city’s Culture Collective, the cultural compact for Sheffield – the moment has arrived to raise our ambition and work much more closely across sectors to position culture as a driver of social and economic renewal that serves the next generation.

But Sheffield is not yet performing to its full potential when it comes to culture and the role that culture can have on the social and economic fortunes of the city.

Sheffield has so much to build from and the cultural sector has helped the city pivot toward socio-economic revitalisation and renewal. There is much to play for, despite the harsh political climate and threat of Brexit. Sheffield has reached a ‘tipping point’ where economic recovery, significantly influenced by an increasingly vibrant cultural and creative offer, means the city can go to the next level and become a ‘magnet city’ that successfully retains and attracts talent and investment.

Management

Introduction

This section covers a variety of aspects to consider when designing the management of the strategy.

Culture & planning

Planning policy can play an important role in protecting and retaining cultural infrastructure. A key example is the introduction of the 'Agent of Change' principle adopted in the National Planning Policy Framework, which places the responsibility of noise management for live music venues on the incoming agent of change rather than the local authority having to impose licensing restrictions on the established licensed venue.

The planning system manages the use of land and buildings rather than individual land users/occupiers and puts land and buildings into various categories or 'Use Classes.' Cultural Infrastructure will normally fall within Class D1 (non-residential institutions) or D2 (assembly and leisure) and workspace will normally fall within B1 (business – either B1a offices, B1b – research and development or B1c – light industry) or B2 (general industrial). Some uses such as theatres will not fit neatly into a particular use class and are termed sui-generis.

It is possible to use planning conditions to successfully deliver cultural infrastructure and workspace. S106 obligations are legal obligations entered into to secure policy objectives, support the provision of infrastructure and mitigate any potentially harmful impacts. Community Infrastructure Levy can be used to fund a wide range of

infrastructure (as justified by infrastructure delivery plans), including cultural and community facilities.

Arts Council England and The National Archives have produced guides, libraries and archives on making the case for s106 and community levy investment in those services.

The National Planning Policy Framework lays out the necessary steps to ensure the provision of cultural facilities the community needs. Planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments
- b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community
- c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs
- d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community
- e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.

Developing a brand

Building upon the understanding of the local identity of the area will enable you to create a brand for the strategy. It is a good idea to base your brand on the local heritage and stories which create an identity of place, and which assets you have available or the activities the area is famous for. Then you can build a meaningful shared identity, without becoming restrictive in terms of appreciating the diversity of the area.

The brand is about visualising the place identity to create a shared local ownership and being able to communicate it to local people and visitors. It is a way for cultural assets, buildings and organisations to come together under a unified visual identity. A brand is also a reminder of the promise and the goal, and evidence of the delivery.

The brand can include a logo, a website or just particular colours associated with the strategy that can be used by cultural buildings and organisations to represent that an activity is part of the cultural strategy. In each scenario, it is best practice to produce a branding manual with a set of rules for using the area brand, aiming to maintain a strategic brand consistency and address the local economic actors beyond the touristic purpose of a branding manual.

Torbay Council

Torbay Culture is an organisation with two employees and a board of local volunteers, established in 2015 to drive forwards the ten year cultural strategy for Torbay. The organisation has a clear visual identity and branding, which is used by projects and organisations either funded by or operating under Torbay Culture. Torbay Culture have commissioned The Shorely, an online magazine guide to culture in Torbay and South Devon. The Shorely uses the same branding style and logo as Torbay Culture and is therefore unmistakably part of the wider cultural strategy.

Resources and investment

Local authorities are finding it increasingly difficult to unlock the required resources to invest in a cultural strategy. This is despite the likely leverage effect of such a strategy – eg on co-investment from other partners. Almost £400 million has been cut from local authority arts budgets over the past decade, new research by the County Councils Network (CCN) reveals. Spend on culture and related services reduced in real terms by 45 percent in the nine years between 2009/10 and 2018/19. For every pound spent on culture and heritage in 2009/10, 61p was spent in 2018/19: for library services, the figure was 58p.

Investment in a cultural strategy cannot therefore simply generate a wish list which the council will then fund. It should instead be positioned as an investment framework which sets out a range of shared priorities for a wider partnership. It should then be the partnership's shared responsibility to fundraise against the strategic priorities. Local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) can be important partners here as they are able to access central Government investment via their local industrial strategies. Universities can help access resources for research and development. There is a range of regeneration and place-based funds coming on stream – such as the Arts Council's Cultural Development Fund; the National Lottery Heritage Fund; a range of 'town deals'; and Future High Streets Funding (although availability of funds changes and evolves over time, reflecting the views of the government of the day). Partners should also work hard to secure private sector co-investment and to crowd-fund some priorities. The cultural strategy, if done well, can help build relationships and unlock co-investment as part of its process.

New Anglia LEP

The New Anglia LEP was established in 2011. Shortly after it was established it supported the setup of a cultural board to act as a sector advisor group, in response to the cultural sector being identified as one of LEP's 10 priority sectors and vital to the realisation of the area's economic growth targets.

The board recognised that it needed a medium-term plan to shape its ambition and potential, and 'Culture Drives Growth' was launched in 2015. 'Culture Drives Growth' underpinned the development of two major strategic projects: 'StartEast: building the cultural economy', a bespoke business support programme for the cultural sector, and the second phase of cultural tourism work – 'Look Sideways East'.

'Culture is not just about holding the right events; it's about getting the wider team and our partners into the right mind-set around capturing and demonstrating the impact for our residents, visitors, businesses and place.'

Rachel Howey,

Strategy Lead Officer: Culture and Visitor Economy, Wirral Borough Council

Impact measurement

Measuring the impact of a cultural strategy is crucial to determining the value of the strategy in terms of overarching goals, as well as being able to showcase added value to potential new funders. The cultural strategy is a living open document that is subject to change based on the impact or alternative opportunities arising, and therefore the document will need constant review. An annual publication of added value will also encourage further buy-in from local people and stakeholders, gaining additional participants and opening up more opportunities.

Adopting a data led approach to evaluating impact and shaping responses to the strategy will mean your decisions are well evidenced. It is important that arts organisations gather the data and evidence needed so that partners and investors can understand the added value role. It is good practice to collect baseline data before the strategy is in place as a comparison set of data that can definitively give evidence of any growth or change in perceptions. Data collection can also be about understanding first hand opinions, cultural preferences, voices and lived experiences of the people. So, alongside these data sources it is best practice to use both creative and existing channels to engage with a wide range of citizens and potential audiences. Quotes that you gather can then be added to your evidence base.

It is important to remember that evaluation should not be an after-thought and should be designed into the strategy from the beginning. You will need to be clear about your objectives if you are to do this effectively.

Below is a suggested list of things to measure both before and after the strategy is in place that could show impact:

- people's perception of place (visitors and residents)
- visitor numbers to key cultural attractions
- attendance to cultural strategy events compared to normal attendance
- satisfaction levels (via a rating system)
- number of cultural events per year
- numbers participating in events and where they have travelled from
- happiness levels
- residents sense of belonging/civic pride
- volunteer numbers
- access to events (accessible platforms, parking, number of free events)
- diversity of visitors (ethnicity, disability, religion)
- number of arts organisations involved

- number of local businesses involved
- increased GDP and employment in the borough's cultural and creative sector
- level of funding
- number of children engaged through the cultural strategy priorities
- take up of creative qualifications/degrees
- number of educational workshops or activities delivered as part of the programme
- media coverage
- social media engagement
- number of cultural strategy events hosted in areas of deprivation and inequality
- increased availability of affordable space (meanwhile and longer-term) for cultural and creative industries/ professionals
- cross sector collaboration
- engagement with other council departments
- improved health outcomes (ie through social prescribing schemes).

In addition to the well-known 'Taking Part' survey run by Arts Council England, you can draw on the following for existing data:

- Local Government Association's 'LG Inform'¹ tool, which presents you with up-to-date published data about your local area and the performance of your council, including a mapping function
- Arts Council England's data dashboard² on the economic contribution of arts and culture at a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and region level
- CIPFA statistics on libraries³, providing benchmarking information based on usage and spend

- libraries taskforce's longer-term, evidence-based, sustainable planning toolkit⁴, which includes an annex of useful datasets that extends beyond libraries.

Local joint strategic needs assessments can also be helpful to understand the demographics of your area and to provide information for any strategy aiming to include a health and wellbeing aspect.

The measures and data sources above are primarily focused on quantitative evidence. It is equally important to measure outcomes and conduct qualitative survey, including case studies from participants. Depending on your desired outcomes, the measures used to do this are often best worked up with other teams in the council, such as economic development or public health, to ensure that you are capturing information that can be used by those partners to make investment decisions.

For instance, you might ask participants if their mental or physical health has improved as a result of participation. The NHS has produced a guide⁵ to a common outcomes framework for their link workers promoting social prescribing, which sets out some useful ways to capture health data.

The British Library's research into the impact of their Business and Intellectual Property Centre network, 'Democratising Entrepreneurship'⁶, is a good example of how to capture economic impact.

Tools in which to collect data include Twitter Analytics, Facebook insights, and SurveyMonkey for capturing feedback via email. Other evaluation tools that are more specialised include Snap Survey market research software and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

There is more information on data and evaluation in the Further Reading section at the end of this guide.

1 <https://lginform.local.gov.uk>

2 www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/economic-contribution-public-investment-and-engagement

3 www.cipfa.org/services/comparative-profiles/public-libraries

4 www.gov.uk/government/publications/longer-term-evidence-based-sustainable-planning-toolkit

5 www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/social-prescribing-community-based-support-summary-guide.pdf

6 www.bl.uk/business-and-ip-centre/about

Leadership

Leadership is key for a successful cultural strategy. But it needs to be redefined from a 'top down' model of leadership where the local authority is positioned as the catalyst and ultimate leader of the process; to a more distributed model of leadership. This is where a steering group might be more appropriately named a leadership group; and where a range of cultural champions are supported to flourish as part of the cultural strategy process.

“We got to the point in the process of writing our strategy where people respected the fact that we had listened and been inclusive and they basically needed us to take a lead and get on and finish the job. It’s still important at this point to make sure you are achieving consensus by making use of your cultural champions but also by being confident and being able to describe and defend the content and structure as being the right thing”.

Tony Witton,
Head of Culture, Kent County Council

The Kent and Medway Cultural Transformation Board

The Kent and Medway Cultural Transformation Board (K&MCTB) was established in 2013, bringing together cultural leaders with the purpose of moving the sector in Kent and Medway towards a more sustainable way of working. Set within a dispersed geographical region, K&MCTB initiated collaborative working arrangements with the aim of maximising culture’s impact

on regeneration and place making and to influence local and regional strategy.

The K&MCTB played a vital leadership role in convening and overseeing the 2017 Kent and Medway Cultural Strategy. This elevated a new level and quality of partnership in Kent, where key partners across the cultural sector took ownership of specific themes and worked in collaboration to develop tailored consultation exercises across the county.

The K&MCTB played a vital convening and leadership role for culture in the county. Its role has been to connect the cultural sector in the county, creating opportunities for engagement and enabling collaboration with partners. It also worked closely with Kent County Council, the District Councils and Medway (a unitary), to shape a shared approach.

The strategy was also developed as a partnership development process which connected the individual business plans and artistic ambitions of Kent’s creative sector, the strategic plans of key stakeholders such as Arts Council England and Historic England, and Kent County Council’s Strategic Statement 2015 – 2020.

In the strategy, an implementation plan sets out detailed outcomes under each of the high level aims emerging from the key actions: create, innovate and sustain. The plan will be published online and will be a live document capable of regular updating.

The vision and key themes of the strategy are also positioned to be viewed alongside plans from other stakeholders, in particular the South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan, Towards A National Prospectus for The Creative Economy in the South East and the Growth and Infrastructure Framework. Key partnerships include What Next?, South East Local Enterprise Partnership, South East Creative Economy Network, Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and the Thames Estuary 2050 Growth Commission.

Climate

Introduction

“Climate change is the biggest threat to our planet and councils are best placed to respond to the public’s growing concern about this and other burning environmental issues moving further to the top of the Prime Minister’s in-tray.”

Local Government Association

Around 230 councils declared a climate emergency in 2019. Councils are taking action to reduce their own carbon emissions and are working with partners and local communities to tackle the impact of climate change on their local area.

This section looks at how to build recognition of the climate emergency into your cultural strategy. For further guidance on what to do after declaring a climate emergency, see the Local Government Association’s Climate Change Hub on their website, including ARUP’s ‘You’ve declared a Climate Emergency...what next?’.

Recognition of climate emergency

Your cultural strategy should acknowledge that your council needs to act on the causes and impacts of climate change, even if a climate emergency is yet to be declared by your local authority. This is or will be a major leap forward; and important for unlocking local resources.

Sustainable growth

Regeneration and growth in the context of culture must be seen to be seeking the most sustainable and environmentally friendly methods.

‘Measures intended to respond to climate change must not widen health inequalities. Similarly, efforts to reduce health inequalities should seek to reduce carbon emissions.’

Sustainable Development Commission

Environmental challenges

Culture can be used as a tool to raise local and national awareness of environmental challenges and what residents can do to help.

‘Exeter: a place based cultural strategy’

Exeter’s cultural strategy includes five priorities, one of which is focused on the environment, and has a vision to be ‘a city that pioneers environmental responsibility and innovation through culture.’

‘Environmental sustainability, and averting the catastrophe of non-reversible climate change, is a crucial issue of our time. Exeter is in a position to develop a cultural identity founded on environmental responsibility and innovation through arts and culture. If we develop cultural practice that helps us to develop deeper relationships and interactions with our environment, then our city will be more liveable. Exeter can play a leadership role in this area, building from its rich mix of expertise, resources and passion. Artists and cultural organisations can provide the creative, interdisciplinary spaces to create new patterns and stories to live by, and redesign and renew our communities and ecosystems.’

Key Actions in achieving this goal are listed as:

- Exeter’s cultural sector joins the Climate Emergency campaign
- the creation of a city/region-wide Arts & Culture for the Environment events programme
- a Sustainable Exeter Culture Enquiry: a new conurbation-wide trial and review process to test our environmental sustainability through culture.

Further reading

Public cultural strategies

There are many existing public cultural strategies from a variety of councils. The list below was used as research for this report and gives examples of cultural strategies currently in place. The list is not extensive and many other examples exist.

London Borough

Southwark Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2022

Unitary Authority

Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Cultural Enquiry 2020

Bristol Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2027

Hull Cultural Strategy 2016 – 2026

County Durham Cultural Strategy, County Durham Cultural Partnership

Metropolitan District Council

Sunderland Cultural Strategy, Sunderland Cultural Partnership, 2014

Rotherham Cultural Strategy, Rotherham Cultural Partnership Board, 2018 – 2025

Coventry Cultural Strategy, 2017 – 2027

Wirral Cultural Strategy 2015 – 2020

Sheffield Cultural Assets Strategy, 2019 (DRAFT)

County Council

East Sussex Cultural Strategy 2013 – 2023

Kent Cultural Strategy 2017 – 27

West Sussex Cultural Strategy 2009 – 2014

Emerging cultural strategy for Warwickshire 2020 – 2025

District Council

Exeter: a Place Based Cultural Strategy, 2019 – 2024

Tunbridge Wells Cultural Strategy 2019

Oxford Cultural Strategy, 2015 – 2025

Towns

Margate Cultural Strategy 2017 – 2027

Culture

Culture-led Regeneration, LGA & Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019

People, Culture, Place, LGA & CLOA, 2017

Cultural Cities Enquiry, Multiple Authors, 2019

Cultural Infrastructure Plan, GLA, 2019

Arts Council cultural strategy check list

Joint Cultural Needs Analysis (ACE)

Public engagement

New Conversations, LGA, 2019

Access Toolkit: Making outdoor arts events accessible to all, Independent Street Arts Network, 2009

Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth, The Warwick Commission, 2015

Policy

The Cultural White Paper, DCMS, 2016

Let's Create, Arts Council England, 2020

You've declared a climate emergency – what next?, Arup, 2019

Arts Council England Environmental Report, Julie's Bicycle and Arts Council England, 2020

Assets

Making the most of your museums, LGA, 2019

Culture for all Londoners: Cultural strategy for London, GLA, 2018

Delivering local solutions for public library services, LGA, 2017

Creative Enterprise Zones initiative, GLA, 2018

Culture is Digital, Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2018

Economy and place making

Contribution of the arts and culture industry to the UK economy, Cebr for Arts Council England, 2019

Connected Growth, DCMS (date not specified)

Inclusive Growth Commission: Making our Economy Work for Everyone, RSA, 2017

The Visitor Economy: A potential powerhouse for local growth, LGA, 2019

Creativity and the future of work, Creative Industries Federation & Nesta, 2018

Inclusive London: Equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, GLA, 2018

Partner, Investor, Champion: An Introduction to the Arts Council England's role in placemaking, Catherine Bunting and Tom Fleming, 2018

The Role of Councils in Developing Local Industrial Strategies, Shared Intelligence, 2019

This Must be the Place, LGA & Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 2019

Cities, the social economy and inclusive growth, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2017

A dashboard for Local Enterprise Partnerships, Arts Council England (LEP and region level data on the economic contribution of arts and culture. ACE plan to launch Local Authority and other data dashboards during January, please keep checking the website for updates)

The Value of Arts and Culture in Place-shaping, Wavehill for Arts Council England, 2019

Data and evidence

The Centre for Cultural Value enhances understanding of the difference arts and culture make to people's lives and society, by making research more accessible and by supporting the cultural sector to capture and evaluate the value it produces.
<https://ahc.leeds.ac.uk/centre-cultural-value-1>

The What Works Centre for Wellbeing brings together evidence for the relative impacts on wellbeing of sport and culture.

<https://whatworkswellbeing.org/our-work/sport-culture>

Creative Health, published by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Arts, Health and Wellbeing, pulls together key evidence about the health impact of participation in arts and cultural activity.

www.culturehealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry

The Creative Industries Federation publishes information about the economic impact of the creative industries, including sector by sector information.

www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk

The Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport publishes annual economic estimates for each of the sectors for which it is responsible, including a data tool to show trends over time and regional distributions.

www.gov.uk/government/collections/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates

VisitBritain publishes regular statistics on visitor numbers to the UK, to attractions, and regional destinations, including overnight stays.

www.visitbritain.org/official-statistics

E-pims is the central database of Central Government Civil Estate properties and land. It is also used to record the estates of the Devolved Administrations and increasingly by other wider public sector bodies.

www.local.gov.uk/topics/housing-and-planning/one-public-estate/partnership-page/government-property-tools-epims

Arts Council England have launched a Local Government Investment Dashboard bringing together existing data on Local Authority financing over time (2013/4-2018/19) by different geographies.

www.artscouncil.org.uk/research-and-data/our-research

Research conducted by We Made That and Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy



WE MADE THAT



We Made That is an energetic architecture and urbanism practice with a strong public conscience.

Established in 2006, We Made That work with public sector clients to prepare incisive urban research, to develop responsive area strategies and masterplans and to deliver distinctive architecture and public realm projects.

We Made That have specialist knowledge and experience relating to high street regeneration, industry and mixed use development, cultural infrastructure, healthy neighbourhoods, public engagement and placemaking. Their projects have been critically recognised, with prizes for masterplans, area strategies and public spaces as well as featuring in key policy and best practice guidance documents.

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Tom Fleming Creative Consultancy (TFCC) is a leading international research and strategy agency for culture and creativity. Established in 2003, TFCC explores the distinctive dynamics of culture, identity and place to inform evidence-based approaches to strategy and investment. With offices in London and Porto, and an associate network in every global region, TFCC has developed cultural and creative strategies, masterplans and studies across the UK and internationally.

Clients include local authorities, Governments, cultural organisations, universities, UNESCO and several Arts Councils, with a growing portfolio of tailored approaches to culture and place-making.



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