

Collaborating for change:

What works well and how might Creative People and Places and National Portfolio Organisations best collaborate to engage new audiences and communities?

A research report prepared for Arts Council England

**Heather Stradling and
Matthew Gieve**

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1.1 Background and context to the report

Arts Council England (ACE) is currently developing its next 10-year strategy for 2020-2030.¹ During the last 10 year period (2010-2020), it has made a significant investment into the Creative People and Places (CPP) programme. This has been an attempt to raise engagement in, and audiences for, the arts and culture within areas identified as being in the bottom 20% of engagement in England². By 2022, it is predicted that over £93 million will have been allocated to CPP over 10 years. ACE anticipates further funding rounds to which each CPP area, of which there are currently 21, may be able to apply. For some areas this may mean nine years of funding in total.

ACE is also currently in its third iteration (2018-2022) of investment in National Portfolio Organisations (NPOs) – a process of awarding 4 year funding to arts and culture organisations across England. The current NPO portfolio comprises of 829 NPOs, including 187 new NPOs, with organisations from the museum sector now also funded through this stream. Funding is allocated against the five ACE goals of excellence, engagement, resilience, diversity and skills, children and young people. NPO funding has increasingly required organisations to demonstrate how they are improving diversity and equality (in leadership, workforce and 'audiences') and reaching new communities through their practice³. The new portfolio represents £170 million greater investment outside of London, compared to 2015-2018.

Both CPP and NPO programmes include commitments to increase engagement amongst those communities with least access to arts and culture and increase diversity of arts provision. However, this is set against a background of growing pressures for arts funding and debates around the historic balance of arts funding. This has been particularly in relation to arts spending centred on London-based organisations and a few institutions that some perceive as elite and not accessible to large parts of the English population.

This research was commissioned following a 'round table event' bringing CPPs and NPOs together to discuss collaborations with each other. ACE was keen to understand:

1. how and in what ways CPP interacts with the NPO portfolio;
2. what successful collaboration looks like; and
3. how ACE could most usefully support future collaborations in order to engage new communities and increase new audiences.⁴

The commissioning of this research into collaborations between the NPO and CPP funding streams in order to engage new communities and audiences was therefore timely.

¹ At the time of report publication, the 10-year strategy is in its final consultation round, open until September 2019. See <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/nexttenyears> for more information.

² Active People Surveys 2008-9/2009-10 (Ecorys, 2017)

³ These commitments are codified in ACE's Five Goals: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-mission-and-strategy-0> to which NPOs are required to subscribe to in part or totally, dependent on the size of their NPO grant.

⁴ The full list of research questions can be seen in Appendix 1

1.2 Research methodology

The research team undertook this study in three-phases (inception and scoping; case study/fieldwork; validation and synthesis), comprising of the following activities:

- Initial national stakeholder interviews and client meetings;
- documentary reviews;
- interviews and focus groups concentrating on four CPP areas;
- interviews with relevant staff from larger national and regional NPOs, who have minimal or no engagement in CPPs; and
- a final validation workshop with sector colleagues (including some who had not been involved in previous parts of the research).

Research activities took place between March and July 2018. Appendix 1 provides more detail on the research methodology but in summary, research participants included:

- 5 key national stakeholders (including 2 national NPO representatives)
- 11 CPP representatives
- 11 national and regional NPO representatives
- 3 non-NPO local arts organisations
- 3 individual artists

Seven CPP teams, four Band 1, five Band 2 and four Band 3 NPOs contributed to the research.

1.3 A note on the audiences for and views presented within this report

This report was commissioned by ACE as a piece of independent research. Whilst ACE is the key client and primary audience for this report, it is potentially also of interest to those working in the cultural sector, particularly anyone interested in collaborations with CPPs or NPOs. The research and resulting report was not designed to present the views of ACE but to find out the perspectives and views of those working within and across the CPP and NPO portfolios. Therefore the views presented in this report do not necessarily represent the official stance of ACE.

1.4 A note on the heterogeneity of organisations

Within the categories of 'CPP' and 'NPO', there is a wide diversity of entities. CPPs and NPOs range in a number of ways including in artistic focus, size, funding levels, location, aims and ways of working. Caution should be taken against over-generalisation. For the purpose of brevity 'CPPs' and 'NPOs' are used as shorthand terms to refer to entities funded through the two ACE funding streams. However, the type of NPO or CPP has a substantial bearing on how these organisations behave.

1.5 Summary of findings and recommendations

A wide variety of engagement approaches were seen to be employed across CPPs and these are described and considered in detail elsewhere (e.g. Boiling and Thurman, 2018). However, collaborations with NPOs (and other partners) tended to range from 'one-off' or 'light touch' – e.g. one-off workshops, 'Go and see' visits, short courses – through to more in-depth and developmental projects – e.g. long-term processes leading to creative outputs co-designed between different communities working with artists. Consortium relationships could be either 'light-touch' or 'in-depth', depending on the specific role of the NPO within the consortium and/or their relationship with the local geographic area.

Key aspects that enabled or prevented collaborations between CPPs and NPOs, of whatever breadth or depth, can be summarised as follows:

Structural factors such as:

- organisational missions, artistic or geographic remits;
- consortium membership;
- organisational or departmental design;
- the fit with existing strategic plans and budget lines;
- leadership and staffing capacity for developing collaborative work; and
- whether or not there was flexibility to adapt or change any of these if it made sense to collaborate.

These were interlinked with:

Relational factors including:

- historic personal and professional relationships and networks;
- leadership styles that could be focused more on competition or collaboration;
- individual and organisational ethos, values and approaches to engagement;
- how knowledge and expertise was held, shared and used with potential partners; and
- the power dynamics⁵ evident within and between organisations, in relationship with ACE and with the wider cultural sector.

Recommendations made include that:

- collaboration between CPPs and NPOs is undertaken if it makes sense in relation to long-term building of community and audience engagement, and there are structural and relational enablers in place to help make it work;
- collaboration is best avoided if it is undertaken purely to help meet funding requirements around 'engagement' or 'artistic quality', in order to communicate to ACE.
- greater clarity is built in communicating and understanding of ACE funding requirements around NPO and CPP collaborations;
- the conditions for exploring collaborations are enhanced by explicitly encouraging mutual learning and sharing of expertise through symposia and CPD events that bring representatives from CPPs and NPOs together on an 'equal' basis;
- support is offered for wider testing of community-driven approaches to arts activities that feeds sector-wide learning;
- further action research is undertaken into what works in community leadership, decision-making around cultural programming and what 'high-quality' co-production in the arts looks like.

⁵ The term 'power dynamics' refers to the way in which people and/or groups interact with each other and the ways in which their status and/or power can be used (deliberately or inadvertently) to exert influence and thereby affect the behaviour of the other.

The research team's findings are divided into two sub-sections:

- Types of collaboration; and
- Barriers and enablers to collaboration.

Each sub-section includes a description of what we found and a set of recommendations based on an analysis of qualitative interviews, focus groups and desktop research undertaken. We recognise that since fieldwork has completed there will have been continued learning and developments around collaborations. For instance, the extension of funding for existing areas, invites for new CPP area applications and the ongoing consultations and work around the next ACE 10-year strategy might have generated some changes in relationships between the two funding streams. This section is based on a snapshot of research activities during 2018, but is also situated within the wider literature around partnership working. Therefore, it aims to support the sector in thinking and planning around collaborations that might work best and the factors that might better enable them, despite context-specific changes.

2.1 Types of collaboration

The research identified a wide range of examples of collaboration between CPPs and NPOs ranging from one-off contact through to long-term and in-depth co-creation. Diagram 1 illustrates the ways in which an NPO (or any other provider) might be engaged with from the perspective of CPPs.

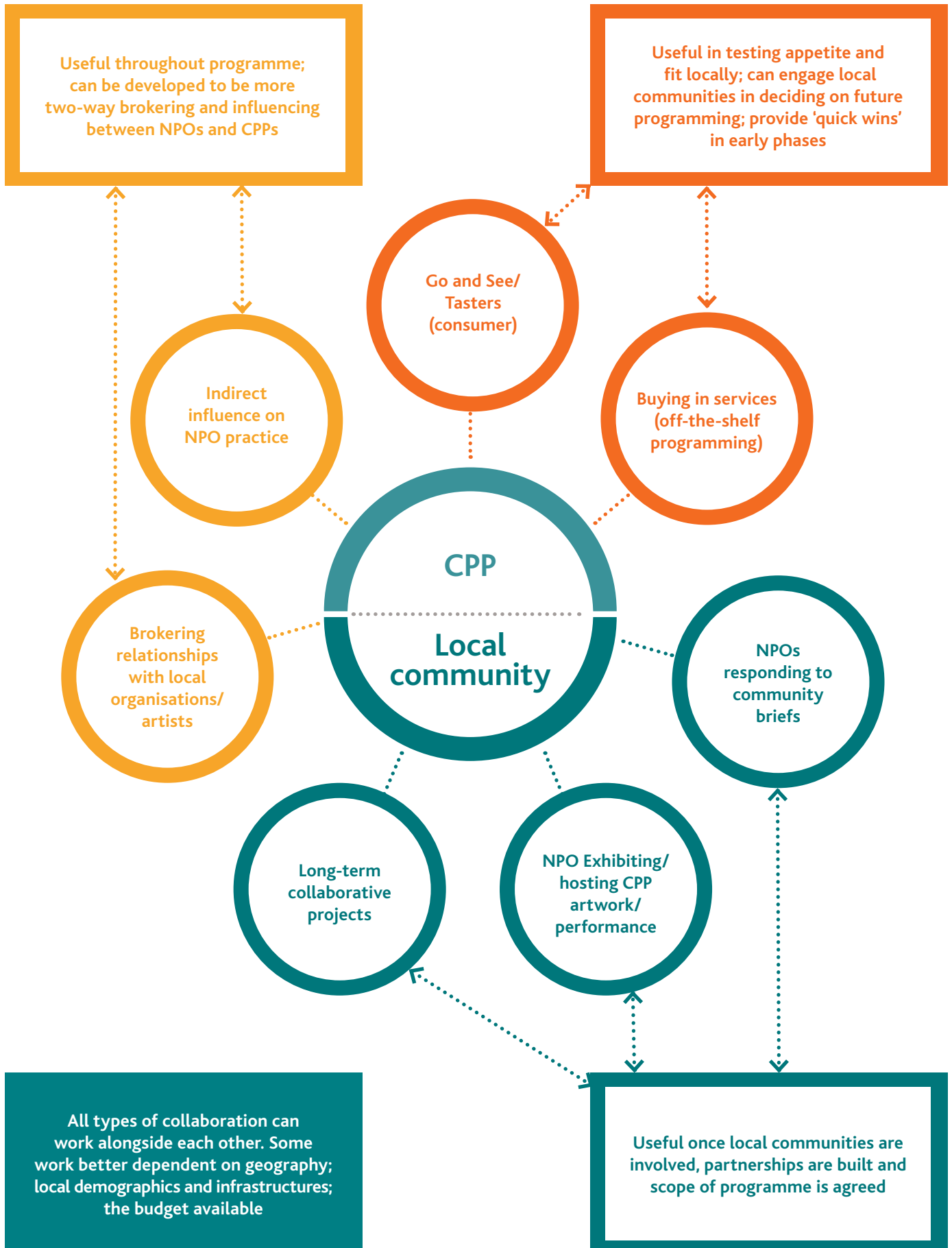
Staff delivering CPP activity often spoke of local communities being at the heart of decision making, supported by CPP staff, rather than conversations with potential partners. How much

a local community might be at the centre of such commissioning decisions varied and was influenced by how long a CPP had been established. However, this approach reflects the ambition and the direction of travel around commissioning within CPPs. Outside of collaborations, we heard of a few examples of indirect learning between CPPs and NPOs, via trade media, online resources, research reports and word-of-mouth. We have included this within the overall picture as a potential route for developing collaborative learning between CPPs and NPOs outside of project partnerships.

Diagram 2 identifies a spectrum of collaborations from no active collaboration, through light-touch, purely transactional and intermediate relationships, towards embedded in-depth partnerships, for instance when an NPO might be a key strategic stakeholder within a CPP Consortium. However, even within these different types of partnerships, there was heterogeneity – so that in some CPPs, a relationship with a touring or visiting NPO might be stronger than that with an NPO consortium partner.

Overall though, collaborations were more in-depth the more closely the NPO and CPP worked together and each type of relationship appeared to confer different benefits and costs on the organisations involved. Lighter-touch relationships represented a relatively easy way for CPPs to enhance the arts and culture offer by drawing on local arts organisations or buying in work from further afield. The more in-depth collaborations became, the greater the opportunity seemed to be for professional artists and community members to work together, for large-scale, memorable events to be created and arguably lasting community engagement. A more detailed description and examples of these different collaborations now follow.

Diagram 1 : Types of collaborations between CPPs and NPOs



'Light-touch', transactional relationships

A light-touch 'transaction – A one-off performance booking

A touring NPO had an outdoor performance piece whose development had been supported and tour co-promoted via a non-NPO partner of a CPP, funded through a different ACE funding stream. This pre-existing partnership and piece enabled the CPP director to book the NPO's performance as part of a local outdoor festival. The success of the performance with local audiences led to the NPO being booked for another outdoor festival a couple of years later. This type of transaction enabled a popular, high-quality performance to be seen by a large number of local residents and was understood to have encouraged audiences to return to further outdoor performances during the festival.

Lighter-touch relationships were often used as a relatively inexpensive way for CPPs to bring (usually external) NPOs work to local communities. For NPOs this type of interaction offered a way of generating income for their organisation and possibly increased audience numbers. They often involved community members receiving a one-off experience of a specific, already-created arts product, such as:

- Visiting an NPO - a gallery, theatre or arts festival – to view one or more NPO arts products ('Go and Sees').
- A performance as part of a local outdoor arts festival or community event.
- an 'off-the-shelf' short course or series of workshops that had been successful elsewhere.

"During the process of making work there are a lot of 'go-and-see visits', in and out of our patch. Audience appetite is being developed as well." (CPP lead)

In each case the CPPs accessed existing NPO products, making them available to local communities. With 'Go and Sees', the CPP and community group would have little or no input into the artistic product, and the NPO might have little or no awareness of the audience attending through CPP engagement. However, in a number of cases, research respondents noted arrangements between CPPs and NPOs to have access to discounted tickets for local community members.

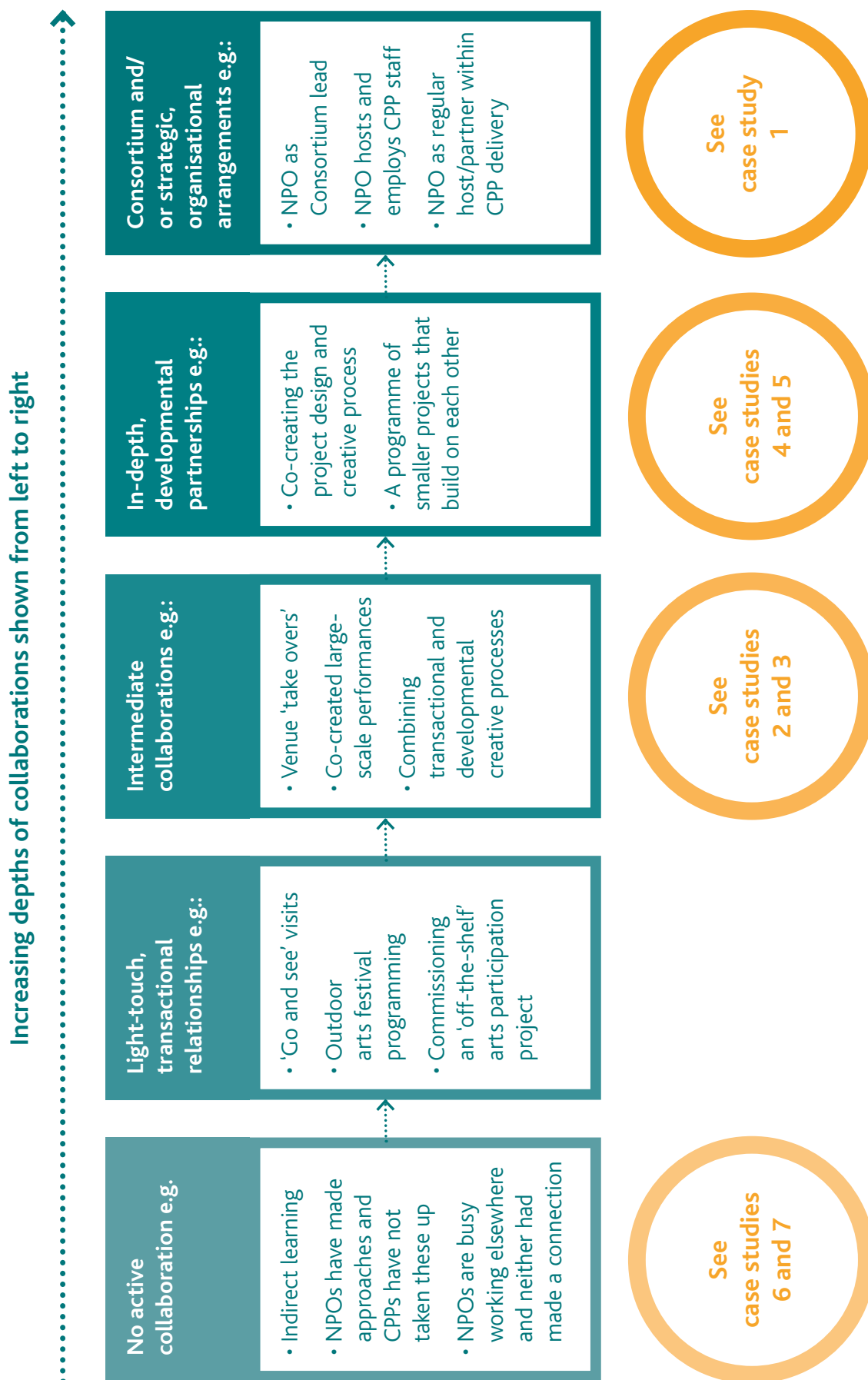
'Organisations who are producing brilliant programmes of film, dance, etc. It is fantastic. It is a resource. Saying let's look at what you're interested to see and look at exhibitions, its broadening horizons [...] people need to know what the bigger world looks like.' (CPP lead)

Relationships that start though this sort of contact might become more developmental, for instance, around the recruitment, and follow-on engagement of or future attendance by local communities. The CPP might also input into the NPO's promotional language within marketing materials to increase accessibility, which, if valued by the NPO, could be seen as developmental support.

In areas with poor arts infrastructure and low engagement, CPP staff spoke of local communities' lack of familiarity with what is available nationally. Such activities were therefore seen by CPP staff as a first step to introducing local people to a range of art forms and approaches. It was also seen as a way of helping to develop local familiarity and knowledge of the range of arts that could be delivered subsequently through the CPP.

'We realise with the community decision making model that people only choose what they know. So if there is an opportunity to take them to something different we will be reactive. We call them 'interventions' in the office. People have never seen contemporary digital arts so they won't ask for it.' (CPP lead)

Diagram 2: The spectrum of CPP and NPO collaboration⁵



⁵ Case studies can be found in Appendix 2

2. Research findings and recommendations

Where a CPP bought in a short course or series of workshops from an NPO, this was perhaps more akin to a traditional arts commissioner bringing in an arts education service on behalf of one or more local community groups.

'We were buying their programme in to [...] community settings over a number of months. This was a bit more 'off the peg': commissioning an existing offer.' (CPP lead)

This type of relationship might involve collaborative working between the community participants and artists, but within a clearly defined structure leading to specific creative outputs (e.g. an informal or online sharing of work).

'...occasionally we get an offer and we say 'actually, we think that is adequately different'. We think people will like it. It's not that expensive and so not a big risk' (CPP lead)

The research did find some examples of larger NPOs making the same, or similar, offers to a number of CPPs— either in the form of discounted tickets to building based NPO events or to regional performances by touring artists and companies. Interaction between organisations here was also reasonably transactional, with the CPP providing audience members in return for low-price tickets to an NPO product, which they could not have brought into the local area, for reasons of capacity and cost.

However more transactional collaborations raised questions for some interviewees over whether they were leaving a sustainable legacy in terms of changes to ways of working, improved networks or greater capacity locally.

Intermediate collaborations

More in-depth than the purely or largely transactional relationships described above were types of collaborations that were part transactional but also part developmental.

An intermediate collaboration – 'Big Bang'

A CPP partnered with a large live performance NPO, aiming to provide a 'once in a life time' experience for the local community. The NPO worked with local performers to develop a large one-off performance, which included pre-existing 'product' created by the NPO, alongside new work created with local people, performed at the local arena. The project was the most expensive to be funded by the CPP and despite some disappointment that it had not been more participatory, CPP staff felt that the project had been successful in engaging a large number of local people.

They usually involved a CPP commissioning one or more NPOs, often drawing on their artistic expertise, capacity and/or networks to deliver a piece or programme of work. These projects often also involved communities in the design, development and/or delivery of the project. Examples included:

- A weekend take-over of local venues and spaces;
- Locally produced festivals involving communities and professional artists organising and/or running activities;
- Co-created local large-scale performances, with professional and non-professional artists performing together;
- Interventions as 'campaigns' that invited local people to have their say or get involved in a variety of ways.

These projects often included a 'big bang' element: engaging thousands of local people to provide a 'once in a lifetime' experience for them; making the project unavoidable for most people locally because of the communication routes used; or which combined a number of events and activities, some small, some large, which together created a 'big bang'.

For these reasons, 'intermediate' collaborations were often more expensive and required working with NPOs to help support the project's scale and ambition. The partner NPOs were often based at a distance from the CPP area - in London or another regional centre - and were likely to have a national remit. In interviews, NPOs were reported as having responded to local wishes and ideas and to have adapted their practices to accommodate CPP requirements. In some cases the collaboration also involved a developmental, co-creation element with one or more local groups. It could include some opportunities for local artist development work as well. Notwithstanding amendments to the NPOs' ways of working, in collaborations of this sort NPOs usually provided an existing approach, product or activity as opposed to starting the development of a completely new product with the community from the beginning. CPP staff suggested that these types of projects were more common in the earlier phases of CPP funding. In part they were used to announce the arrival of a CPP in their area, as an expression of its vision. This was also partly because, in some cases, CPP staff members were yet to develop relationships with the local arts infrastructure who they believed could have provided alternative partners for work. Finally, funding was greater in the early years of the programmes, enabling such activities to take place.

'Because of the way we work [now], we put out briefs and then people respond. Often they are smaller, 5k projects, [it's] never an NPO to do that. The reduction of the funding leads to the reduction of commission scale. [Large NPO commission] cost 120k. We'll never have that cash again.' (CPP lead)

'In-depth', developmental partnerships

The research team found a few examples of longer-term collaborations between NPOs and CPPs where the two worked together to bring complementary skills and resources to develop new, locally tailored programmes of work.

In-depth and developmental partnership

A CPP based in a rural area approached a nearby NPO after consultation with three local community organisations. The community organisations wanted to undertake visual arts projects and the CPP hoped to draw on the NPO's artistic networks. The NPO was interested in participating in the project as it had struggled historically to undertake in-depth community engagement. After a participative process (supported by NPO staff), the CPP commissioned three artists in residence to work in the community organisations. After 18 months of collaboration, the artists in residence and the community groups exhibited their co-created work within the CPP area, at the premises of a CPP consortium member and outside the area, at the NPO gallery.

As part of their mixed programme of activities, most of the case study CPPs described commissioning or developing a small number of large scale, longer term events or pieces. These typically involved greater levels of community participation, longer development times and possibly greater involvement of local artists or those interested in developing their professional arts skills.

Examples of this kind of joint working included:

- The development and production of a multi-arts performance including co-creation with local communities and a local cast;

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- The co-creation and delivery of a participatory arts programme, ending in an exhibition at a regional NPO;
- A series of smaller projects, which continued development of creative work and supported the local arts infrastructure.

In some cases these projects involved artists from NPOs working with CPPs and local community members over a long time to develop novel works. In these partnerships, CPPs tended to play a facilitative function, brokering relationships between artists and communities to create the conditions for co-production to take place. This involved the CPP drawing on its established community relationships and trusted reputation locally, connecting artists with host organisations.

'We did the relationship building. We had a person work with each organisation. [The NPO] didn't have those relationships. [They] had the art form expertise, links to artists, and they have a great approach to working. There was a synergy of approach that meant it worked. [...] By bringing all of that together it was bigger than the sum of its parts.' (CPP lead)

A noted benefit of more in-depth work was the possibility for ongoing relationships to develop between community members and arts organisations. This might lead to a continued collaboration, funded from other sources. The research found examples of projects initially developed by the CPP, where the CPP then stepped back allowing the partner NPO to continue the work and take on the responsibility of funding it sustainably.

'[The] difference is in what happens after the projects [...]. There is now a much stronger sense of [an] ongoing relationship whereas the model of buying in an offer, that feels much more transactional. [The in-depth approach] brings a more profound [...] engagement.' (CPP lead)

In addition to the final product, interviewees felt that this type of collaboration was more likely to produce lasting effects both for communities and for NPOs.

'It is an important thing to happen. I would hope the work we did in a small way left some small imprint in that community.' (NPO lead)

Support for local artists within these projects was identified by some interviewees as a key part of the legacy – including training, mentoring, brokering new relationships with larger NPOs, including those supporting artist development⁶.

'We have done a fair bit of skills development work, creating opportunities for those who live here to work alongside artists and arts managers. So they are getting live experience of how a project is run. What we're now seeing – some of them are running their own projects. We have also been supporting new groups to form.' (CPP lead)

Programming a series of smaller projects, with each building on previous work was more viable for work with more local NPOs, than for geographically distant NPOs. It tended not to be as expensive as bringing in a larger NPO and built on a greater commitment to the geographic area that a more locally based organisation would more likely bring. They were also viewed by some as being more likely to be invested in developing local artists and were more likely to be consortium partners. Finally, these types of projects were perhaps more likely to lead to, what one CPP lead described as, a 'cascade impact'. That is, the initial impact of the project itself was followed by the impact of increased local arts capacity and the generation of new projects and activities.

⁶ Whilst CPP was designed as an 'Audience Development' programme, some interviewees expressed strong views about support for local artists through CPP.

Consortium relationships

The most in-depth and thoroughgoing forms of collaboration identified by the research were where NPOs were part of a CPP, as either lead or as a consortium partner⁷.

Consortium relationships might mean very close working between staff of each funding stream, and easier access to staffing and technical resources.

'[CPP] have the money and the [internal NPO] has more capacity: front of house; box office; technical team and then we fit well together. We have cash and better links to community groups and a different sort of approach, good meetings of two organisations, [though] not without its tension.' (CPP Lead)

In some cases project partnerships didn't happen because of concerns over conflict of interest – for instance, it might be perceived as unacceptable for the NPO to be using budget to deliver CPP activities if they contributed to or led decisions about how budget was spent. Likewise, NPOs might need or want to apply for funding from bodies that the CPP was also planning to approach. In other cases there seemed to be a lack of clarity over the level of support or activity that could be expected from consortium members – so other partners might have been disappointed that more in-kind support wasn't provided as part of the NPO's consortium role.

As with every other form of relationship, the benefits and drawbacks of NPOs engagement within consortia differed depending on the type of NPO and CPP. However, key factors included:

- the NPO's geographic proximity to the CPP area;
- their capacity to contribute to local decision-making processes and CPP infrastructure support;

- how any potential conflicts of interest were dealt with between partners.

It was reported by most interviewees involved in CPPs and participating in this research that NPOs were encouraged as consortium partners by Arts Council England regional offices in the early iterations of CPP⁸.

'The original consortium had a lead partner NPO which made sense on paper, and helped get the money for CPP. The artistic producer [...] wasn't 'of the place'. They had a different notion of what was needed, parachuted in, it was a bit awkward for a while.' (Key stakeholder)

In later iterations of CPP, these NPOs tended to be smaller, less well-funded community-based NPOs – 'not the usual suspects' for large Arts Council England grants. In cases where larger NPOs were involved in bids, the perception was that it was better if they were not leads for CPPs.

'The [first] bid went in [with the NPO] as the lead. Due to feedback on the first bid, [our non-arts partner] went as the lead in the second. There was an inference that ACE steered away from [the NPO]. I assume the Arts Council [...] didn't want a large NPO leading the consortium.' (CPP Lead)

However, to what extent these perceptions reflected actual ACE requirements advice has been a matter of debate and will be reflected on as part of Section 2.2. (Page 14).

⁷ Likewise, if an NPO was a senior member of a CPP steering committee, this could also involve a strong working partnership.

⁸ This commonly reported experience from early iterations of CPP was not a stated requirement or recommendation made within official ACE guidance to new CPP applicants. However it is possible that regional ACE officers may have given additional advice around NPO involvement, as part of their developmental and support roles for funding applicants, based on their understanding of ACE funding requirements, their knowledge of potential applicants and awareness of local/project contexts.

Consortium partner – An NPO as lead for a CPP area

A building-based NPO was the lead partner of a CPP. The CPP presented an opportunity for the NPO to extend work beyond its building into less-served areas of the district. In the bid-phase the consortium reportedly received a steer from their ACE regional office that the NPO should lead the CPP. The NPO took the lead role, hosting the CPP staff, providing organisational and technical support as well as venue space. In turn the NPO benefited by being involved in generating more arts activities for local communities, which it would otherwise have struggled to do, developing its own community engagement approaches and practices, and increasing its reach.

Other forms of collaborative learning and shared expertise

It is over simplistic to see NPOs as the only place where artistic excellence exists or CPPs as the only repository for audience and community engagement. The research found expertise within NPOs around community engagement and co-creation, and in CPPs around artistic excellence and audience development. It was also found outside of the ACE-funded arts and culture sector. What was brought to collaboration therefore was context-specific and could be perceived differently depending on individual interviewee perspectives. During the research, we identified at least eight cultural organisations involved in CPPs becoming NPOs in 2018, for instance in-situ who had been previously involved in Super Slow Way. There were at least another three organisations delivering CPP activity who had previously been NPOs or its previous incarnation, RFOs (Regularly Funded Organisations) but who didn't currently have this relationship with ACE.

Additionally, there seemed to be a high level of staff movement between NPOs and CPPs, with many ex-NPO staff now working within CPPs, and CPP

staff moving on to NPOs and other cultural sector organisations. This demonstrates that learning and knowledge moves between each part of ACE's funding streams and across the cultural sector in a range of ways, not just through formal and publicly noticeable partnerships. It also points to a key enabler and barrier, discussed in the next section, but which came up a lot – that of personal and pre-existing relationships and networks.

In conclusion, there were different types of collaborations in evidence between CPPs and NPOs – from light-touch and one-off to in-depth and developmental partnerships. However, the reasons given for working or not working together were not specifically about the type of 'products' that could be offered or the communities that could be worked with, but instead focused on a combination of **structural and relational factors**.

In essence, collaboration didn't take place purely as a result of the resources each partner could bring, but was reportedly influenced by the way they approached collaborations, and how their approaches were perceived by the other. The next section discusses these factors in more depth.

2.1.1 Recommendations summarising effective collaborations for different contexts and different aims

We recommend that:

- those from either CPP or NPO portfolios considering potential collaborations with each other, first consider how working together might help achieve community and audience engagement aims that couldn't otherwise be achieved without this collaboration. Below is a summary, listing the ways in which different forms of collaboration might work depending on context.
- collaboration is best avoided if it is undertaken purely to help meet funding requirements around 'engagement' or 'artistic quality', in order to communicate to ACE.

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- If partners from either portfolio believe collaboration will help achieve mutual aims around community and audience engagement, the potential structural and relational factors that could inhibit or support collaboration are assessed, as the next section explores.

Light-touch

- If NPOs have a specific product that CPPs can commission, it might be more useful to those CPPs getting established and wanting to generate a local 'buzz'. For instance, programming outdoor arts in a local town centre can be helpful when setting up CPP in a new area to announce its arrival. This can develop into annual events, generate appetite and reputation locally.
- 'Go and sees' can engage local communities in seeing what is available to programme and increase confidence and debate around artistic quality and what makes work relevant to different communities. These also offer the opportunity for NPOs and CPPs to broker relationships between individual artists and communities that could lead to longer-term relationships.

Developmental

- Once CPPs are established, they are likely to be more interested in having conversations with NPOs at an earlier stage of development and involve non-arts partners and local communities in the conversations. If an NPO doesn't have the resources to engage in early development of this type, then it is unlikely to be suited to working developmentally in a CPP.
- Likewise, NPOs may be committed to and experienced at developing ideas and relationships with communities beyond a single project. CPPs can help broker such ongoing relationships and help generate a 'ripple effect' of engagement, not all of which needs to be CPP-commissioned.
- Combining transactional and developmental ways of working, for instance bringing in a large-scale company to present existing work, alongside locally developed creations, can generate a high profile locally and a 'once in a lifetime' experience.

It may not lead to an ongoing relationship between an NPO, a CPP and its communities, will take a long lead-in time, and require thinking about follow-up, and significant investment – in staffing, partnership building and funding. However, as part of an ongoing developmental programme, it could offer a boost that reaches wider groups of people, contributes to local pride and engages new local partners that would not otherwise engage.

Sharing learning without active collaboration

- If an NPO has a track record of engaging and/or developing new work in partnership with communities, or of 'place-based' approaches or work in unusual settings, then CPPs may benefit from approaching such NPOs to learn from their experiences and tailor this to their own geography and aims.
- The CPP website is a resource for sharing CPP learning. Likewise, Culture Hive shares learning from CPPs, NPOs and the wider arts sector. These offer relatively quick ways of learning from others' experiences before starting something anew.
- Both CPPs and NPOs can bring expertise in artforms, audiences and community engagement. Each partner values being listened to for the experiences and knowledge they have, which might not be immediately apparent. Particularly when relationships are new, giving time for finding out about each other's work and approaches can save time at a later stage when partnership challenges arise.
- If an NPO is already engaging new communities within identified 'low engagement' areas that are not CPP-funded, it might be better for communities and the arts sector for this work to continue rather than moving resources to a CPP. However, there may still be valuable learning to be shared between CPPs and non-CPP activity, particularly those that are geographically near.

2.2 Barriers and enablers to collaboration

The main driver of collaboration between an NPO and CPP was not necessarily their placement within an ACE-funded stream, but more related to the particular aims of the programme, project or intervention. Of most importance to those interviewed was whether the other could help contribute to specific organisational, strategic, artistic or social aims.

'We didn't go out to purposefully work with NPOs – we wanted the best partners for each of those commissions - who happened to be NPOs - being good at what you do and being an NPO.' (CPP lead)

Most explicitly, the 'division of labour' within such collaborations saw the CPP bringing its expertise in community engagement, its community networks and embeddedness. In exchange, the art form and/or production expertise of the NPO, its professional artistic networks and technical resources would be brought in to a CPP. In these circumstances, the CPPs were able to enhance and amplify the NPOs' ability to engage with communities. The NPOs were able to enhance the artistic offer of CPPs for their local population and support in the delivery of large scale or technically complex projects. However, behind an explicit exchange of clearly delineated resources was a more complex picture.

Both structural and relational factors were identified by interviewees as enablers or barriers to CPP and NPO collaboration and helped influence whether or not they would enter into partnerships with each other.

2.2.1 A note on partnership working

Research literature often cites the importance of the 'exchange of resources, and the combination of resources', alongside relational characteristics, in maximising opportunities (e.g. Andersson, Holm and Johanson, 2005) and implementing successful partnerships (e.g. Baker, El Ansari and Crone, 2017). Both intra- and inter-organisational behaviour is 'closely embedded in networks of inter-personal relations' (Granovetter, 1985). Likewise, successful change programmes, which CPP can be understood as, require '...an appreciation of the human as well as economic and technical factors that intermingle to produce successful outcomes' (Krantz, 2001). The collaboration experiences of CPPs with NPOs seem to echo the findings from this wider literature around partnerships and organisational change, as this section goes on to explore.

2.2.2 Why CPPs and NPOs might collaborate

All 21 current CPPs seemed to have an NPO as a consortium partner⁹ or as a senior member of their steering group, and in some cases the relationship between an NPO and a CPP was both relationally and structurally strong. However, when it came to project partnerships, it appears that if either partner could deliver their engagement aims by working apart from each other, then they often would prefer to do so.

Regarding the engagement of communities and new audiences, we heard staff from both CPPs and NPOs speak with passion about their approaches and partnerships. While sometimes it would make sense to collaborate with each other, in many cases, working with other partners, for instance with local, non-NPO artists, producers and arts organisations, non-arts partners and diverse communities, were cited as being of greater relevance.

⁹ Consortium (or steering group) arrangements are set up differently in different areas and have been subject to changes. Further information can be found in evaluation and other CPP reports (e.g. Bunting and Fleming, 2015). We use consortia as a term to describe those organisations collaborating in order to govern, direct and strategically plan CPP activity in a specified area.

[We are] working with people not like us. (NPO Lead)

However, if an NPO had a particular product, resource or relationship that a CPP could not otherwise access, then it could make sense to collaborate. Likewise, if a CPP enabled an NPO to deliver within an area or with groups that they might not otherwise be able to reach, this could support collaboration. One NPO decided to work in a CPP, because they trusted the way in which the CPP approached engaging communities, and the CPP wanted to bring the NPO in for their artist networks. This collaboration was facilitated because of previous working relationships prior to CPP.

I knew [name] from their previous job, working long term [They were] looking at our models of work and ... a really interested collaborator in learning so when [they] moved to West Moormouth¹⁰, they ... [were] interested in bringing us to [West Moormouth]. (NPO Lead)

Another NPO could see that working with CPPs would 'tick the box', as they called it, for engaging new communities. Some CPPs responded to their approaches and collaborated. For others, this type of partnership was only relevant if their local communities perceived it to be so, and a number of communities didn't.

'...it was more of an opportunistic approach [from NPOs to CPPs at the beginning], more about them [the NPO] than the people and places'. (Key stakeholder)

'...even within each [ACE] goal – there are numerous ways of how you can do that – there are a number of elements that ... your organisation needs to do to fulfil the needs of the NPO's criteria – some organisations fit very naturally [with CPP], others don't.' (NPO Lead)

This section goes on to explore in more detail the different structural and relational factors identified through the research. The ways in which these factors were seen to interconnect are illustrated in Diagram 3. This highlights the importance of taking both into account when considering what might help or hinder collaborations between the two funding streams (or in any form of partnership). It seeks to support organisations in thinking through whether or not particular collaborations could work well and to help understand why they might or might not be productive.

2.2.3 How structural and relational factors interconnect

As indicated above, when interviewees were asked about why they did or did not collaborate, a key point made was about whether the partnership was seen to be relevant, or helpful, in engaging communities and new audiences. Both NPOs and CPPs were busy developing and fulfilling their **strategic plans**, with **budgets, staffing** and other **resources** allocated. Delivery was designed to take place within particular **geographies**, in agreed **timescales** and which met **funding requirements**. Some of these plans might have developed as a result of **internal and external working partnerships**, and facilitated through the **organisational system / framework**. Partnerships and strategic plans however might have been built as a result of **historical** friendships, working **relationships** and professional **networks**. These relationships may have begun and/or been strengthened through shared **philosophies, approaches and/or perspectives** and through the **leadership styles** of the organisations. Some form of shared history between individuals looking to collaborate seemed important in some areas. In others, it might be a link between an NPO staff member and the geography of a CPP that helped facilitate a partnership.

¹⁰ Pseudonym for CPP area

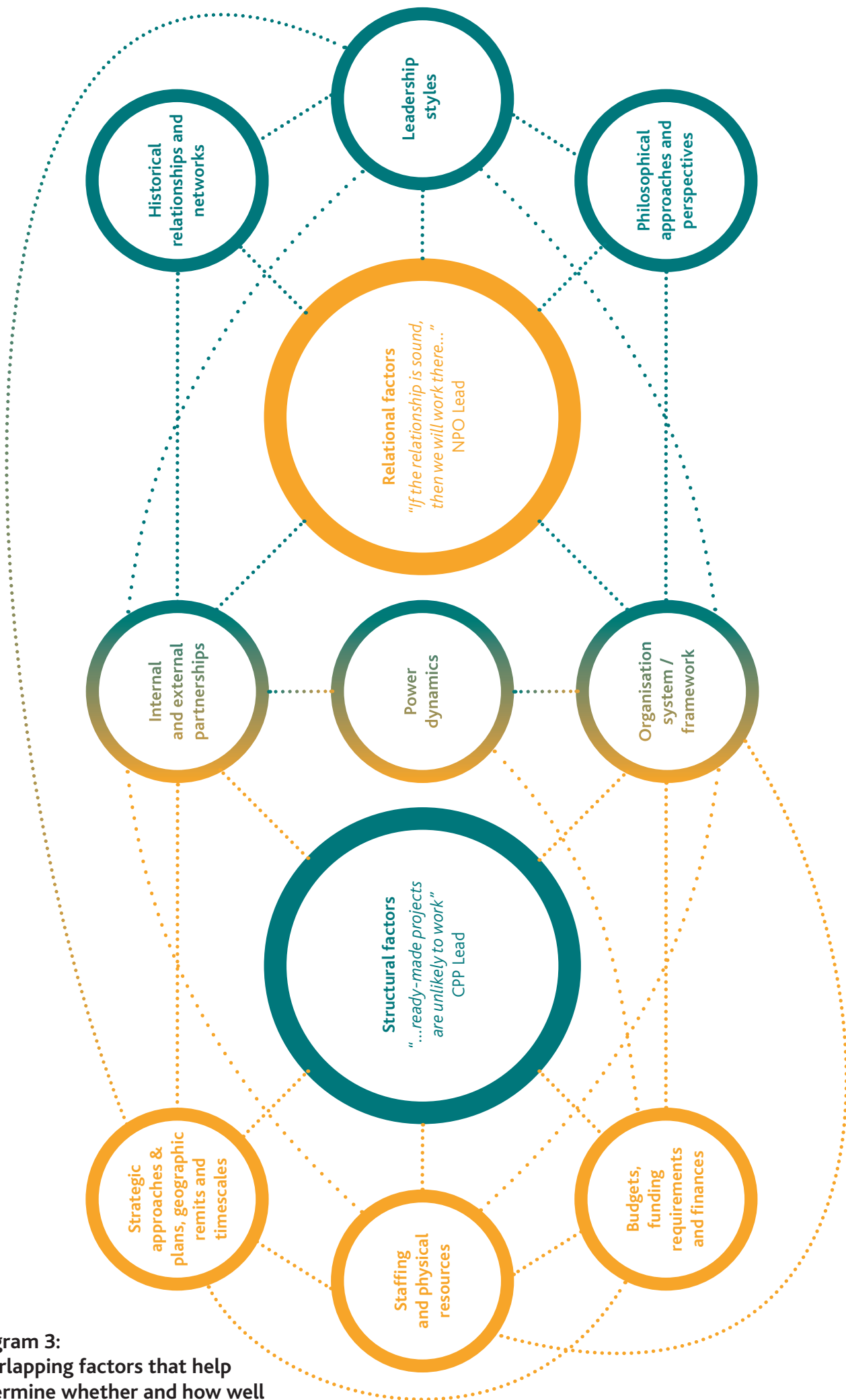


Diagram 3:
 Overlapping factors that help determine whether and how well CPPs and NPOs collaborate

2. Research findings and recommendations

Without these types of relational connections supporting the structural factors in place, expending resources on developing NPO/CPP partnerships was rarely viewed by interviewees as a productive use of limited organisational energy.

'It costs too much to work with them; you need to pay for their running costs, before they start work with us. So we often work with individual artists, rather than big organisations.' (CPP lead)

In contrast to this view was the statement made by a number of NPOs that they in fact brought investment to partnerships. From this alternative perspective, a CPP could potentially deliver more through working with an NPO, than without. It seems therefore that behind the perception as to whether it was cost productive or cost negative to collaborate, was perhaps the reality that both CPPs and NPOs work with limited budgets. Therefore, when it made sense or was possible structurally to collaborate, relational factors might contribute to a decision about who to collaborate with.

In further support of this point, we heard of examples where CPPs could perhaps have benefited from the support, links and experience of NPOs, where there were a number of structural factors evident that could facilitate collaboration. However the CPPs in these cases were reportedly starting from scratch without accessing expertise that was available.

[the] CPP ... was finding it difficult to engage people. As [a nearby] NPO we offered our experience of reaching people... We found the CPP narrow, again not drawing on or listening to our advice. (NPO Lead)

'[...] focus on collaboration, not building new infrastructures [...] [but] you need to be up for collaboration.' (NPO Lead)

This indicates some missed opportunities and also reflects perhaps on the work involved when setting up new structures and needing to recruit staff teams.

'...lack of collaboration is possibly more about CPPs' lack of development than lack of engagement [by] NPOs...' (NPO and CPP Lead)

Not seeking out knowledge and expertise that might be available nearby can be experienced as fragmentary for those already working within a local arts infrastructure and becomes tied up with a key factor, involving both structural and relational elements – **power dynamics**.

The way a CPP or NPO experienced its own power in relation to communities, partners, ACE and the wider arts sector came up throughout the interviews. The way in which partnerships were structured (e.g. one-off commissions or developmental relationships) played into these dynamics, as did experiences and perceptions of how excellence and resourcing were being decided. These in turn seemed partly determined by geographic and class-based inequalities on which arts funding have been historically established. How people approached these inequalities in their work differed between individuals, organisations and their locations.

Power lies in very different places across the country, within regions and localities, across the arts sector and in different places within organisations. For individuals working in the arts sector it is linked to previous history and experience, including which artforms individuals may have trained in, the organisations they have worked with and for, and their personal and professional networks. The way power is enacted can be fluid, dependent on the situation. It might not be held where it is perceived to be held at any given time (e.g. Granovetter, 1985).

Whilst CPP was designed as an 'audience development' programme rather than a 'community arts' programme, interviewees described similar power dynamics that have historically been found between artist-led and community-led arts organisations. Traditionally in the arts sector, 'community arts' or 'arts development' have been viewed as relatively low status and low priority. This is in contrast to 'pure' artist-led production and in particular the work of institutions perceived to be 'elite'. Crudely characterised, some CPPs reported the experience of some NPOs not taking their artistic products seriously and said that they felt some condescending attitudes towards them. Likewise,

some NPOs felt that they were perceived as exclusive and inaccessible, and/or didn't know about community engagement, and were therefore subject to reverse snobbery. This antagonism between those within either field seemed to reflect tensions beyond the CPP initiative. It both reflected and evoked the deeply entrenched dynamics inherent within the historic British class system. This is perhaps still felt unsurprisingly within the arts funding system and in the ways in which the arts and culture are engaged with and 'consumed', and indeed CPP is in part a response to this. Uncertainty and strong opinions expressed therefore also seemed to speak to the potential ongoing 're-balancing' of the ACE funding portfolio, ACE's future priorities and what that might mean for the wider sector.

In some instances the greater funding being invested in CPP activity, and the tacit rise in the status of this way of working, may have resulted in a feeling among CPPs of the 'boot being on the other foot'.

'...in places like [Barton¹¹] that hasn't had these companies visiting [before] – names of companies don't mean a thing – reputations don't mean a thing – is it difficult for NPOs? We do try to protect them from that – it is the reality of the situation.' (CPP Lead)

'There are no particular benefits or barriers to being an NPO locally, we are the only NPO [...] and always have been. Most people [...] don't know we are an NPO.' (CPP and NPO Lead)

Whilst the CPP concept was broadly welcomed by most interviewees, its introduction by ACE as an initiative generated some concern and criticisms. This research was not about people's views about the implementation of CPP. However, interviewees' views and perceptions about this and ACE's messaging around it, did seem to have a bearing on people's perceptions of subsequent inter-funding stream collaborations or non-collaborations. With new areas due to be funded, it seems relevant to summarise some of this debate here. In doing so, we hope to offer some considerations for those leading regional and local implementation of new CPPs.

2.2.4 The power of ACE messaging in relation to CPP and NPO collaborations

The central role of Arts Council England and its influence in the behaviour of both CPPs and NPOs, came out prominently during the research. The design of CPP was intended to be an asset-based approach to community-led, place-based arts and culture activity. However, some working locally or in nearby geographies or with similar communities did not experience the implementation in this way.

'Rather than CPP coming in as a helicopter, see what is happening [locally] and how can CPP support this?' (Local non-NPO arts organisation)

This experience presented some arts organisations/projects with the dilemma of whether to view CPP as a collaborator or a competitor. Likewise, despite the intention that CPP areas would develop their own 'people and places' driven approach to audience and community engagement, there have been different perceptions expressed by both CPPs and NPOs about ACE expectations of their collaboration, regardless of whether it would help engage new communities. For example, an NPO and CPP lead suggested that another CPP seemed to receive more encouragement to collaborate with larger NPOs from their relationship manager, and therefore they seemed to collaborate more with them. These different perceptions may reflect the national, regional and local infrastructure of ACE, with perhaps different emphases placed on messages at different levels.

Perceptions of ACE requirements might therefore have been an enabler for some CPPs to bring in NPOs.

¹¹ Pseudonym for CPP area

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The most common form of collaboration involved NPOs as consortium partners. It was reported by most CPP interviewees that this was encouraged by ACE local area relationship managers in the early iterations of CPP. However, despite ACE not officially mandating NPO membership in CPP consortia, the perception itself that they had, highlights how behaviour is influenced by perceptions of where power lies across the overall system.

Whether the explicit message was in some instances given by ACE relationship managers to CPPs and NPOs to work together or whether this was a misperception, it illustrates an important dynamic within the arts sector in England: namely the centrality of Arts Council England and the reliance upon ACE funding for a large number of organisations. The consequence of this fact is that arts organisations may be prone to 'over-interpreting' messages from ACE. Suggestions, for example, might be read as commands or some might 'read between the lines' to try to infer the underlying priorities of the funder.

'the more guidance that can be given to NPOs about how they are meant to or could work with CPP – the messaging isn't clear –' (NPO Lead; CPP Consortium member)

For many organisations, remaining in favour with ACE and keeping aligned with their funding priorities is a matter of survival. Whilst this may be the inevitable consequence of the arts funding structure in England and not entirely preventable, it is perhaps something for ACE to consider when communicating to those it funds or those it could fund.

As recognised by a number of interviewees, CPPs are still in relatively early stages of development, with changes to their own plans about how they will work in future, based on learning so far. Likewise, it is an action learning process for ACE. Therefore, there is opportunity to address any misperceptions and for those within each funding stream to develop new collaborations, if and where appropriate, in future iterations. We are aware that when talking to potential new applicants for CPP funding, ACE officers are also clarifying that collaboration with NPOs is not a funding requirement.

This section goes on to explore issues of quality, risk-taking and sustainability of funding, all of which contributes to the structural and relational factor of power dynamics within the ACE-funded arts sector. Whilst these touch on broader, systemic issues, they are summarised here, because they seemed to influence decisions around collaboration or non-collaboration between NPOs and CPPs.

2.2.5 Judgements around quality

One way in which power dynamics seem to be enacted in the arts, is through conversations around what 'high quality' is and who determines what quality of practice is and is not.

'[We are] offering something rare for them. People talk about us offering access to excellence. We are also a useful name for CPP to be associated with – we give breadth to them. [...]' (External NPO head of engagement)

'...being an NPO does give a badge of honour – a sign of quality.' (Key Stakeholder)

'I keep hearing [...Arts Council England...] say they want quality and leadership [...] think they know best all the time.' (CPP staff member)

Some CPPs have perhaps been able to use their increased status to demand more from NPOs (and non-NPOs):

'We feel we are pushing NPOs to do more with their artistic practice...' (CPP Lead)

The questions of quality and where it resides were debated at the CPP Conference of 14th and 15th June 2018 (titled 'People Place and Power'), as part of a wider discussion about handing decision-making power to communities. Whilst there might be enthusiasm from many across the system to increase engagement and access to the arts, perceptions of what it can mean to work in a community-led way can vary.

Co-production processes require specific values and resources (e.g. Coalition for Collaborative Care, 2016). It can create challenge to traditional definitions of 'high-quality' art, as reinforced through historic funding of the arts. It means being 'ready to listen as much as you talk', requiring the ability to flexibly and creatively respond to community-driven ideas, in contrast to providing certainty of what programming will look like. Traditional approaches to arts funding agreements have perhaps required this certainty and used this to help determine whether the applicant was speaking ACE language in relation to quality of outcomes. However, whilst the conversation is shifting to include a broader notion of quality that relates to process as well as product (arguably within ACE as a result of CPP learning), perceptions of what this means in practice appeared to be different amongst interviewees.

For instance, one collaboration between an NPO and CPP was cited by a number of research contributors as an example of excellent practice, whilst being accessible. Staff members from the CPP involved though were more reticent about its success in engaging new audiences and communities. It involved very few non-professionals in its creation, and:

'We had audience members saying, "that was a bit weird", so I'm not sure how much it helped [build new audiences]' (CPP Lead)

However, working with this NPO did enable the CPP to communicate to ACE that it was achieving and understood 'quality of product', despite their misgivings about the engagement outcomes. Therefore, how CPPs and NPOs perceive ACE's criteria for judging quality and the criteria being used by ACE needs further checking for assumptions in relation to engaging new audiences and communities.

One interviewee commented that within the world of sport, funding is allocated for 'elite' sports and community sports – the emphasis for the latter is getting people active, not necessarily to become athletes. Yet when it comes to the arts sector, the debate seems to get stuck on whether it is 'good' art being funded, not on people being encouraged

to create. This contributes to unhelpful perceptions about who can and who can't do art, arguably more starkly than it does within sport, and is potentially a limiting factor in relation to wider community engagement and sharing power with communities. Quality debates might therefore act as a barrier to what could be valuable collaborations, and an enabler to collaborations that speak to the arts sector and funders, rather than the communities involved. Conversations about what is meant by excellent practice in relation to community-led cultural programming therefore will need to continue, to ensure that second guessing ACE's understanding of this does not inadvertently drive local delivery.

2.2.6 Risk-taking

Following on from perceptions of quality, there were differences identified in how CPPs and NPOs approach risk-taking. Whereas CPPs are funded to take risks as part of their action research aims¹², NPOs are funded to guarantee 'quality of product'. This can lead to NPOs (and non-NPO arts organisations) fearing that taking risks could lead to 'failure', affecting future funding successes. Those NPOs with longer track records and/or higher levels of personal power and influence in relationship to ACE might feel more able to take risks with community engagement and creative practice (or in contrast, feel no need to change what they were doing beyond a 'tick-boxing' exercise, as some interviewees called it). In these cases, there was the perception that ACE couldn't allow such organisations to fail because of all of the structural and relational factors described earlier on. However, even between the largest and longest-funded national organisations, there were examples given of different experiences of how 'failure' and fulfilling broader engagement aims were responded to by ACE.

Interviewees from smaller organisations whose ACE funding made up a relatively minor proportion of their overall income, expressed greater anxieties about the need to maintain and increase ACE support whilst retaining other income such as from ticket sales.

¹² <http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning>

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For instance, a smaller non-NPO cultural venue, as part of a CPP programme, was supported to book artists that met ACE requirements in relation to quality, and helped attract new audiences that the venue wanted to reach.

However, when this project completed, the venue could not continue to programme this type of work without CPP support. They didn't have the resources to subsidise the gap between what their audiences could afford to pay and the cost of the booking.

'We have to be commercially viable, otherwise it's difficult to continue the work'. (Non-NPO arts organisation, Lead)

For some larger NPOs, the department or staff responsible for 'engagement' was not always financed with the resources or freedom to invest in exploratory partnerships, but instead needed to generate additional income and/or audiences for their artistic products. This perhaps meant they could not be as flexible in responding to community-driven needs as CPPs might require. Likewise, NPOs that are used to responding to direct requests for a project rather than being invited to tender, are not necessarily set up to compete for tenders in the way that non-NPOs and smaller NPOs might be accustomed to.

'Some NPOs were annoyed that they weren't paid to pitch for CPP work, but non-NPOs make their money [by winning work] through pitching...' (Key stakeholder)

Therefore, the key reasons for ACE funding an NPO or programme –whether developing new work with communities or where professional programming was central to their funding agreement – could affect both its approach to and perception of risk-taking, which might then impact a NPO's ability to work with a CPP. We return to this in the next sub-section.

Whilst in principle co-production might seem a good idea, it requires organisations to have the right staff, the available time, resources and the will to build relationships and co-create with communities, which means sharing control and in the process involves risk taking. Who is supported to take such risks and who

is not will perhaps be crucial to democratising access to the arts for those from different regions, different class and cultural backgrounds. This does not prevent NPO and CPP collaboration, but caution is needed in how such collaborations are approached. This takes us onto the final sub-section, sustainability of funding.

2.2.6.1 Sustainability of funding

ACE's commitment to CPP is demonstrated through the continued funding of existing CPPs (the earliest areas recently having been awarded nine years of funding) and the announcement of funding for new locations. This places CPP as an important part of ACE's investment as it enters its new 10-year strategy. Although this is clearly a welcome progression from shorter forms of project funding available, as one interviewee put it, *'social change takes 25 years'*. Those working with and within CPPs will need to maintain their sights on the long-term future and the potential best routes for sustainable development.

As part of this work, supporting organisations to make connections, resource share and therefore potentially increase sustainability where they geographically or strategically overlap, could plant fruitful seeds. However, an intervention that cajoles or requires NPOs to work in CPP areas or using approaches that they are not set up to do structurally and relationally, might not be wanted from different communities and could backfire against the aims of CPP to be community-led. Engagement work can take many different forms and as one interviewee said, 'CPP is great, but it's not the only way'. Where NPOs are successfully engaging new communities elsewhere, then it might not be wise to expect them to work in CPPs.

'...the only question is how to ...continue to deliver [what we currently deliver]' (NPO Lead)

Building on this, the NPO structure may be appropriate for the future legacy of CPP in some areas. However, if this develops as a key mechanism for sustaining CPP-type activity, then it is likely to lose the opportunity for building different types of leadership and collaboration that might not be seen within more formal ACE-funded structures.

'If we [took on the CPP programme as legacy], I don't know what our consortium partners would have to say about it!' (NPO/CPP Lead)

Likewise, if CPPs are expected to become a new form of NPO, this could work against wider engagement goals and increase unhelpful competition between different ACE-funded structures and with other local arts infrastructures. Potential 'resource grabbing' was mentioned by some during the research, meaning that some NPOs were felt to be looking to CPP to ensure their organisational sustainability. Looking ahead to the next 10-year strategy, uncertainty about longer-term funding might influence CPP and NPO appetites for working together, in either direction. Relationship building between NPOs and CPPs requires investment from each partner, which might be better served in building relationships with partners outside of the funded arts sector, and which might better support greater investment in areas outside of London.

In general, all interviewees agreed that without continued investment from ACE, CPP activity would not be sustainable and in many cases would stop immediately. There were also comments made about the perceived expectation that CPPs needed to demonstrate sustainability beyond ACE funding, in some of England's poorest areas, with extremely entrenched economic and social deprivation. This was contrasted with the significant financial support required to ensure ongoing operations of the longest-established and highest funded arts institutions, in areas such as London. While these institutions do also need to demonstrate sustainability, they do so with the expectation of continued ACE funding in the future.

Sustaining increases in engagement of new communities and audiences through collaboration between CPPs and NPOs is perhaps best approached using a case-by-case assessment as to whether this makes sense, taking into account the structural and relational factors described above. However, without driving active collaboration, ACE could perhaps support the coming together, on an equal platform, of those from both funding streams. Building on the work of

CPP's peer learning activities, enabling the sharing of challenges and potential solutions around engagement, so that each can learn and build on each other's practice, might be the most cost effective way of combining resources across the funded arts sector, and beyond.

'[...] time is needed for building and sharing information, dialogue and trust.' (NPO Lead)

'A conversation to inform future developments would be brilliant.' (NPO Lead)

2.2.9 Recommendations to support creating the conditions for collaboration, where appropriate

In response to the perceived barriers and enablers to collaboration, and their relationship to increasing new communities and audience engagement outlined in this section, below are a series of recommendations for ACE:

Communications and sharing of mutual learning

- That ACE consistently applies its policy messaging, internally and externally, while NPOs can be part of CPP consortia or project partners this is not a requirement of the policy, to help protect against misperceptions of any spoken or unspoken funding requirements;
- Building on the work of the CPP peer learning group, for ACE to host regional and national symposia that bring NPOs, CPPs and the wider arts sector together on a mutual footing (not led by one strand or another) to share experiences and knowledge around what has and has not worked in engaging different communities in different contexts;

- ACE considers hosting of CPD events that address directly the building of capacity and skills in and beyond the arts sector around diversifying creative community leadership and collaboration in the arts, particularly for those from areas of 'low engagement';
- ACE considers further action research around community leadership and co-production in cultural programming within and outside of CPP areas that feed into sector-wide learning such as symposia and online resources.
- ACE provides greater clarity and transparency about its decision making structures and processes in order to reduce the risk of misunderstanding
- That ACE utilise different types of symposia to continue and encourage conversations and provocations around what excellent quality of practice is and who defines it. This could build on existing knowledge around what high-quality co-production processes, and community-led programming, in the arts look like.

Supporting risk-taking to increase communities and audience engagement

- That ACE considers small pots of funding for
 - arts organisations (NPOs and non-NPOs) wanting to test new creative approaches in partnership with communities, within and outside of CPPs, that are focused on action research and sharing learning without having to 'prove' quality of product (supporting safe 'failure').
 - community groups who want to design and run creative activities, taking learning from community-focused funds offered by Sport England and the National Lottery Community Fund.

3

Conclusion

This piece of research was commissioned to explore how and in what way CPPs collaborate with NPOs, what successful collaboration looks like, the barriers and enablers to such collaborations, with recommendations for ACE around how to support future collaborations for the purposes of increasing and engaging new communities and audiences. There was a variety of collaborations described during interviews with CPP and NPO representatives, from light-touch, transactional commissions through to long-term, developmental partnerships. However, during the research, the question was raised of whether the collaborative potential of CPPs and NPOs had been reached. Our observation was that it had not been reached yet. There seemed to be a variety of structural and relational factors working for and against collaborations – including different strategic, geographical and funding remits, stretched capacity of those within either funding streams and historic interpersonal and professional relationships and networks. We came across some competition between the two funding streams for a decreasing ACE funding pot, varied perceptions across the sector around who holds expertise and who doesn't when it comes to engagement activities, and different points of view about ACE funding requirements, actual or perceived, in relation to collaborations. Finally, how power dynamics within and across the sector, and in relation to wider issues of regional, class and cultural inequalities, play out appeared to be an important

element that helped enable or prevent fruitful collaborations.

In conclusion, we have made a series of recommendations that focus on providing the conditions for collaboration to develop, based on sharing mutual learning, skills and knowledge but without encouraging active collaborations between the two funding streams. We suggest that it is preferable for organisations within each stream to consider whether collaboration is appropriate in their contexts. However, in many cases project-based relationships may be best developed with those outside of either ACE-funding stream. Likewise, whilst we warn against encouraging collaborations, we believe that building on the CPP peer learning group, mutual platforms such as symposia hosted by ACE rather than by leaders within either funding stream could help protect against unhelpful competition. Ultimately, more and wider sharing of learning and knowledge across both funding streams is likely to be in the best creative, economic and existential interest of the cultural sector as a whole. It will also be in the longer-term interests of existing and potential communities and audiences who could benefit as a result.

Appendix 1: Research activities

Research Questions

The following research questions formed the basis of this study.

1. To what extent are CPP and NPO organisations collaborating in order to engage new audiences and communities?
2. What form does this collaboration take, what methodologies are being used to achieve what aims?
3. What has brought organisations together initially and what do they perceive as the value of continued working together?
4. What has worked well so far in joint working between NPOs and CPP places?
5. What are the perceived barriers to joint working between NPOs and CPPs?
6. What factors enable and inhibit success for collaborative working?
7. What do organisations perceive as the future direction of work between CPP places and NPOs? What gaps exist that these relationships could fill?
8. What are the models of good practice and lessons for the sector on collaboration and learning between CPP and NPO organisations to engage new audiences and communities?
9. What learning is there for Arts Council England and other strategic bodies on how to encourage collaboration between NPOs, CPPs and the wider arts and culture infrastructure in order to better engage new audiences and communities?

Research approach and methodology

The research team approached this study in three-phases, starting with an inception and scoping phase, followed by a main fieldwork phase, culminating in the validation and synthesis phase. Each phase itself contained a number of activities designed to meet the overall aims of the research and was accompanied throughout with regular client liaison to report progress and validate the direction of the study.

Phase 1: Inception and scoping

During the early weeks of the project the research team undertook a rapid **documentary review** and four **national stakeholder interviews**. Key stakeholders were interviewed based on their overview of the two funding programmes and the wider context within which they operate. The interviews along with the documentary review helped the team to familiarise itself with the subject of study and the overarching context. On the basis of the scoping activities, the research questions were refined and a sampling framework for fieldwork was developed. The research tools for main field work were also designed, ultimately resulting in a range of semi-structured interview and focus group topic guides designed to be appropriate for the different types of interviewee.

Phase 2: Case Study / Fieldwork

Our initial proposal was to select five case study areas from the 21 CPPs. However, as a result of the scoping research and in consultation with the client, one of these five case study areas was replaced with an NPO case study. Research across the five case studies was conducted through a combination of telephone interviews with staff and stakeholders from the CPPs, NPOs and other appropriate stakeholders, and site visits that included focus groups and further interviews. Convenience sampling of interviewees was used to 'snowball' interviewees from key programme staff and the providers.

The number of interviews and focus groups varied depending on the capacity of the stakeholders to participate.

In total 19 interviews and two focus groups were undertaken as part of the case study phase. Interviewees and focus group attendees represented a range of different roles including:

- ACE staff
- CPP leads
- CPP staff members
- CPP consortium partner leads (NPO)
- CPP consortium partner leads (non-NPO)
- NPO leads
- NPO learning/ engagement leads
- Non-NPO arts partners
- Independent artists

Phase 3: Validation and synthesis

The final phase of the research involved thematic analysis of qualitative data and consolidating the previous two phases of research into draft 'findings' for validation. A selection of 10 stakeholders, both those who had and had not been involved during previous phases of the research, attended a validation workshop to discuss the findings and their implications for future policy and practice development.

Following the validation workshop, research findings and validation activities were synthesised and iteratively brought together into the final report and Executive Summary.

NB: Interview and Focus group topic guides are available on request.

Appendix 2: Case Studies

A note on case studies

The case studies included here are drawn from interviews, focus groups and documentary data analysed as part of the research. In some cases, different organisations or activities are blended, in order to represent similar experiences and perspectives, and to afford anonymity. All details are factual and quotes are actual.

Case study 1: NPO as part of a consortium

A local building-based NPO was the lead partner of a CPP based in Southwich, a semi-urban area with poor transport links and communities divided by large trunk roads. Funding for CPP activity was allocated to primarily work with 'hyper-local' areas that could not easily access the NPO. The arrival of CPP presented an opportunity for the NPO to extend work beyond its building to these less-served areas of the district.

'There is a lack of community infrastructure, virtually no cultural offer or engagement and transport available to the venue is pretty much nil.' (NPO and CPP Lead)

In the bid-phase the consortium received a steer from ACE that the NPO should lead the CPP:

'It was suggested [by Arts Council] that if there was an NPO in the [CPP] area, and it was suitable, then they should lead the consortium' (NPO and CPP Lead)

From the beginning of the CPP, the NPO took the lead role, hosting the CPP staff, and supporting its activity through the provision of staff support and technical resources, financial management mechanisms and venue space.

Because CPP activity mainly occurred in areas far from the NPO, staff expressed no particular expectation that the CPP would lead to new audiences for them, nor was that the reason for their involvement. Nevertheless, there were a range of benefits to the NPO. Most notably as a locally based NPO, they were interested in seeing more arts activities taking place for local communities. Also, in working with the CPP, they had been able to develop their approaches:

'I think it has changed our thinking slightly about engagement and participation. We have learnt from CPP...being open to the co-design of projects.' (CPP and NPO Lead)

One of the first CPP projects involved handing over the venue to local community groups to design and run a national community takeover event. Handing over decision making power to local communities challenged their normal ways of working. It was described as:

'a difficult experience, challenging to us as an organisation, not having control over the quality or structure...[but]...it went really well and changed the way the whole team worked and think.' (NPO and CPP Lead)

The NPO has supported the CPP's outdoor arts festivals, which have included contracting other NPOs to present work, as well as bringing additional investment into the area through pre-existing partnerships with NPOs. However, in relation to partnerships with external NPOs, the reasons for doing so were about the specific aims and objectives of each organisations matching.

'It isn't about favouring or not favouring an NPO' (NPO and CPP Lead)

Case study 2: Intermediate relationship: CPP and large NPO work together to produce a 'big bang' – 'once in a lifetime' experience

A CPP based in Barton, a medium sized town, partnered with a large live performance NPO. The project was developed through a process of community consultation and was aimed at building recognition of the CPP locally and providing a 'once in a lifetime' experience for the local community. The NPO was viewed as an attractive potential partner by the CPP as it was a nationally recognised 'name' with existing links with one of the CPP partners (a building based NPO in Barton).

The NPO worked with local performers, including children and young people, to develop and perform a large scale performance. A programme of songs voted for by local people including songs co-written with local musicians and members of the community was developed. This culminated in a large one-off performance by the NPO, local musicians and a local choir at a local arena. The event was performed to around 1000 audience members and sold out of tickets.

The project was the most expensive to be funded by the CPP and drew in funding from other sources including from a national arts development NPO. The CPP had intended for the project to be highly participative but logistics restricted the co-creation to two weekends where the core members of the NPO visited the town to work with local performers:

'I was disappointed with the level of engagement. [...] The [performers] were lovely but was it proper engagement or just gloss?' (CPP staff member)

'They were talking about the collaboration but very little happened. There wasn't enough time. [...] It turned out to be cookie cutter.' (CPP partner lead)

As a result, staff members of both the CPP and NPO suggested that there had not been a lasting impact on the way the NPO worked and the CPP and NPO had not been able to sustain the working relationship beyond the concert:

'Quite a transactional relationship. The [NPO] flew in and out for the gig, just another date in the diary.' (NPO Community and Education lead)

'Did [NPO] learn anything? Probably not.' (CPP staff member)

Nevertheless CPP staff felt that this approach had been successful in some ways. It had successfully engaged a large number of local people and the performance had been very popular. Moreover CPP staff cautioned against assuming it had not been value for money:

'We filled [the arena] for the [NPO], people still talk about it.' (CPP lead)

'What was the value of that money to [the NPO] compared to smaller commissions? I'm never sure. The saving grace was there were 1000 people in the audience and 70 people in the choir. This was one of the best things in their life.' (CPP lead)

'Price per engagement is the wrong way to look at it. How do you measure that impact and at what point. For example the [arena], if they do festivals that massively changes arts infrastructure. It is hard to tell.' (CPP lead)

Case study 3: Intermediate collaboration: Developmental / joint commissioning model between CPP and NPO

A CPP based in the town of Langton, with no NPO based in the local authority area had an ambition to bring art and artists that local populations would not otherwise receive. The Director had a pre-existing relationship with an NPO that focused on supporting artists to develop their arts practice. Through this relationship they were able to identify leading artists that could develop new and ambitious arts interventions that engaged different local communities.

'[The CPP Director] invited us to curate [the event], told us their aims, we responded to this, they saw what we could bring to the table.' (NPO Lead)

Over time, the partners built towards an event, that took place at different venues and locations, over an intensive time period. Work led by nationally renowned artists involved specific targeted activities with particular communities, through to interventions that tried to reach as much of the local population as possible. They engaged local professional and non-professional artists, with the CPP and NPO working together to create a 'buzz' locally as well as within the wider arts world.

'They found the locations, we offered professional development for local artists. Not hit and run. We empowered local artists, brought artists in working with local artists, and commissioned work [for different places and different groups]. [The CPP] were brilliant... We wanted to work with [a local arts venue] and do something substantial... [CPP Director] was keen to work with [Production Company /NPO] and that wouldn't have happened without us.' (NPO Lead)

Both the CPP and NPO could come together to create a large-scale programme of events in a specific place that neither would have been able to do alone. For each partner, it wasn't about learning specific skills from the other but about bringing a set of resources and networks together to offer the local area something it could never have otherwise experienced, without that partnership. It became a joint learning experience, particularly in relation to negotiating local politics.

'Generally speaking, we're a host for the relationship...we're the connectors... the custodians...' (CPP Lead)

In the process, the programme of work generated local pride, engaged many different people in the streets and in unusual ways. It also supported the local arts venue to bring in new audiences and host work it couldn't have otherwise afforded to programme.

Case study 4: In-depth and developmental collaboration: A CPP and NPO broker long-term working relationship between artists and local community groups

The CPP is based in West Moormouth, a rural area populated by small towns and villages described as 'hyper local' nearby to a large metropolitan area with significant arts infrastructure. The CPP had identified an NPO based in the nearby city as a possible partner as the result of consultation with three local community organisations with whom the CPP had built relationships through earlier projects and activities. The community organisations had expressed an interest in a visual arts project which was the specialism of the NPO, a 'band 3' art gallery. The CPP was interested in bringing in 'high quality' artists and exploring ways to sustain impact in the local area beyond the CPP funding period and felt that a large NPO may be able to help. The CPP hoped to draw on the NPO's artistic networks and thereby extend the range of possible artists with whom the community groups could work.

'Artistic excellence, this is so important. This is why we are talking to NPOs. There needs to be the very best work and artist.' (CPP lead)

The NPO was interested in participating in the project as it had struggled historically to undertake in-depth community engagement and saw the collaboration as a way to draw on the CPP's community networks to meet its own community engagement goals and develop its practice in this field. The initial approach by the CPP was made to the NPO's Head of Learning who was a professional contact of the CPP lead.

The CPP, NPO and three community groups established a commissioning panel made up of representatives from each of the organisations with a view to each community group commissioning a separate artist in residence.

'This group then selected the artists. [NPO] had put the call out to artists they know. This extended our reach: greater diversity of artists that the group could look at and select.' (CPP lead)

In total the collaboration lasted 18 months, culminating in the art that had been co-created by the artist in residence and the community groups being exhibited both within the CPP area, at the premises of a CPP consortium member, and outside the area at the NPO gallery.

'They all made art with the artists. We were then working with [the NPO] to curate it into an exhibition [...] Therefore everyone had their work professionally presented – very gratifying.' (CPP lead)

Reflecting on the project, the NPO staff member said that they had "learned a lot from CPP" in terms of how they approach community engagement:

'Meaningful partnership: we collaborated with the services and service users and that is a shift. Previously when we've talked about partnership we've not know what it means.' (NPO, head of engagement)

Case study 5: In-depth and developmental collaboration: A CPP and small NPO work together to on 'big bang' production

As part of its first funding phase, the CPP based in Barton, partnered with an NPO for their 'signature commission'. The project was designed to build the profile of the CPP locally and engage a large number of local people as both audience and co-creators of the art. A process of community consultation resulted in the CPP seeking to commission an original multi-arts piece. The CPP released a tender which was ultimately won by a small 'band 1' NPO working in multi-arts development, whose mission is to support young artists to create new works for performance.

The NPO was encouraged to put in an expression of interest for the commission by the CPP's internal NPO consortium partner with whom they had a prior working relationship. This connection was felt to aid the commissioning process:

'Talking NPO to NPO to draw on those networks. [...] They had confidence in us, we had confidence in them, mutual references, came recommended.' (CPP lead)

On winning the contract the NPO put together four potential teams of young artists, each was paid a small amount to develop an outline of their piece and a short taster. Each taster was performed at the premises of the internal NPO for a local audience to vote on.

'We put four teams together that we thought might meet their brief. A certain style [...] a certain narrative, not too contemporary, appeal to all ages, upbeat.' (NPO lead)

In the early stages of the project the process of community engagement and co-creation proved a challenge for the NPO. This way of working was not felt to be their 'bread and butter'. In one case the NPO struggled to manage a community event which was described as 'descending in anarchy'. However through the support of the CPP these issues were overcome and the project proceeded:

'The longer that we're here, as project progresses, we can do that translating. We become the conduit for the community and artists.' (CPP lead)

With the support of the NPO the successful team of artists went on to develop a full length multi-arts piece with community input and a community cast of performers. As the production developed the NPO also stepped in to provide technical support and help mentor the local producers. Drawing on industry contacts and in house skills:

'We called in a favour from a company [...] they gave us £30,000 of technical equipment for 4k and we did the video art for more or less free. This raised the production values to more professional levels. We brought in a team of professional mentors.' (NPO lead)

Ultimately this project resulted in an original piece being written and then performed at the internal NPO:

'Produced a show [...] feel good, with a large community cast, lots of parts for them. This is licenced worldwide.' (NPO lead)

Case study 6: Non-collaboration: An NPO with low awareness of CPP, but long-term experience of community-focused arts practice

This national NPO creates professional performances for its theatres, tours work to different areas of the country, and has a long-standing educational and audience development programme. It currently has a relationship with multiple towns and cities across the country, in areas identified as low in cultural engagement. Long-term relationships have been built with local partners, some for more than ten years at a time, with the aim of building local capacity for planning and programming.

The NPO reported having not been aware of CPPs' work and that collaboration with CPP had never been raised before either internally or in conversations with its ACE Relationship Manager.

'We're likely to be working in some of the same places [as CPP], but I don't know.' (NPO Lead)

For these reasons such collaboration did not appear within the organisation's strategic plans. Instead the NPO continued to focus on strategic working in different areas and questioned how they retained their current partnerships, if they were to begin working with a CPP:

'All sounds very exciting [...] [but we are] successfully meeting the demographic aims of CPPs. We have the same objectives but we are at capacity in delivering against our objectives.' (NPO Lead)

Nevertheless, the interviewees appreciated the CPP approach of supporting communities to take charge of curation and expressed an interest in finding out more with a view to possible future opportunities for partnerships to be developed:

'Now would be a brilliant time to connect the dots.' (NPO Lead)

The one caveat was that partnership development takes time and it would need to make sense strategically, geographically and programmatically.

'Where's the genuinely right partner and where are we committed to the area and the outputs? Not [partnering] because it brings in money.' (NPO Lead)

However, this NPO was hoping that even though they were able to make the links, ACE could usefully broker relationships between NPOs and CPPs for information and experiences at least to be shared.

'If CPPs join hands with NPOs, time is needed for building and sharing information, dialogue and trust.' (NPO Lead)

Case study 7: Non-collaboration: between a regional NPO and a nearby CPP

This NPO has decades of experience working at hyper-local, local, regional and national levels. In order to develop and produce multiple tours to rural villages and towns, it has built numerous partnerships with arts and non-arts partners, often supporting artists to create work relevant to their communities and audiences. When CPP funding was awarded to a nearby place-based consortium, the NPO was open to different types of collaboration, from sharing knowledge and experience through to partnership working. They had some conversations with the CPP lead in its early set-up stages but got the impression that the CPP did not want to collaborate.

'...lots of meetings went on but [we] were never invited...We said we wanted to go, [but] we felt there was reticence from the CPP, the opportunity to join up never came.' (NPO Lead)

The NPO expressed the view that CPPs were setting themselves up as new entities, rather than connecting existing resources. In contrast, it saw itself as being more open to different partnerships.

'We've got a social mission and we look for people we can work with [...] we want to [stop our work] because it's done its job, not create a new institution.' (NPO Lead)

Having had negative experiences of CPPs in their region, this NPO was happy to continue on building its partnerships with those outside of the arts.

'...We bring energy into buildings and work with diverse audiences. We...identify which organisations we can work with... [We are] working with people not like us.' (NPO Lead)

A key reflection was that the opportunity to work together in order to engage new communities had so far been missed. The NPO believed that ACE could play more of a role in supporting NPOs and CPPs to collaborate in order to better engage new audiences and communities:

'It's about values, investment...It would be good for ACE to give more guidance.'

Likewise they expressed the view that strategically dividing artist development and audience development was unhelpful:

'You can't separate artists and audiences...The arts talks to itself and not the wider world. [...] The role of artists is to listen and respond... help artists [...] understand the social context of their work.' (NPO Lead)

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The Tavistock Institute
30 Tabernacle Street
London EC2A 4UE
+44 (0)20 7417 0407
tavinstitute.org

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