See Think Make
Case Study

CREATIVE SCOT LAND

ALBA | CHRUTHACHAIL

About the Project

See Think Make (STM) is the development and training agency for Arts Award in Scotland. Its remit is to provide support, information and promotion so that young people can gain recognised qualifications in the arts. It works with creative hubs, youth groups, colleges, libraries and similar community-focussed institutions to make these awards accessible. In addition to this, the organisation delivers projects of its own.

At the beginning of 2017, the agency teamed up with Scran, the online digital archive run by Historic Environment Scotland (HES), and Scotland's Urban Past (also a HES project) to develop a pilot project that would illustrate how Arts Award eligible training can be delivered in a heritage setting.

Alongside the core partnership of STM and HES, this project has forged connections with Stirling Council, Forth Valley College, St Modan's High School and The Smith Gallery and Museum.

Using the Toolkit

At the 'Is this the best it can be?' workshop held by Creative Scotland, STM and HES staff defined seven questions its staff felt were core enquiries to be made as to whether their project planning was addressing issues of quality, accessibility and effective partnership working. These questions were used to form a check list to be consulted at the start of each subsequent development session, so that concerns could be raised, discussed and troubleshot. Shared terms of reference are crucial for effective co-production, and so a compass was also developed.

Feedback

While the project is yet to start in earnest at time of writing, STM staff maintain they found the toolkit to be of significant value in providing a robust, simple framework for planning discussions. It ensured an equal amount of time was spent going over the logistics and content of the project as was dedicated to its impact and outcomes.

Says Sarah Longfield of See Think Make, *"I am guilty of focusing too much on the content of a project and the logistics in the early days of working with new partners, in a desire to make things tangible and, therefore, more accessible. However, people will generally invest more if they have a say in defining the project's outcomes and impact more than how it'll work in practice.*

"We've been reminded that taking the time to plan a project properly will ultimately result in better quality participative experiences and greater artistic exploration. Whilst we all know this, it is often a corner cut as the sector spends so much time on speculative project development. However, in order to access public money, a robust development is essential. We are keen to see how the framework can improve the quality of our approach across the board."

Sarah goes on to note the symbiotic relationship between the toolkit and her project, and the extent to which they shaped each other. *"We changed some of the questions so they really fit with our project, but having the toolkit list of the different categories and suggested questions was an excellent way to then refine for our purposes.*

"It also provided a clear way of checking in at the beginning of each meeting to ensure we are on track and it gave a safe, open platform to raise any concerns, which can usually be quite awkward in the first stages of new partnerships."