

ENGAGING LIBRARIES HELPSHEET 1 SHAPING YOUR IDEA – HINTS AND TIPS

Why do you want to do this project?

It's important to think carefully about the motivation behind your idea, along with the context in which you plan to work. This will help you to develop the engagement approach you want to use. Ask yourself why you want to do this work at this time: are you responding to particular needs or opportunities? What change do you want to see as a result of your work? What are the benefits for the people involved? Answering these questions will help structure your idea and you might find there are better ways of achieving your goal. It might also be worth learning from people/projects that have gone before – have people tried a different approach to you? How is what you are planning different from what has been before? How is this building on your own existing activities?

Who?

Developing a clear understanding of who you want to engage and why is crucial to shaping your approach. Think about the particular interests and concerns of your target audience and ask yourself why the issue you want to explore is relevant to them. Also consider what factors might prevent people from taking part and how might you address these? You might want to work with different groups, and would therefore want to consider different approaches to engage each of them. We encourage you to develop your understanding of your potential audiences, this could be through your own first-hand experience and relationships, or through consultation.

Collaboration

Consider your own expertise, strengths and assets, and the areas where you need input from others to make your idea work. Speaking to different people from the beginning will mean they can contribute in a valuable way and not only help to inform and shape your idea but also help you find potential collaborators. Collaborators can add value to your engagement; for instance they could have expertise in theatre, or working with particular audiences such as young adults.

What & How

Think clearly about what you want to do and how you are going to do it. Are you developing new relationships or creating a new space for engagement? Consider how you intend to encourage conversation and exchange with the people you are working with and the people you're engaging. You should make sure your activities enable all parties to participate in the conversation in a meaningful way.

Legacy

Think about the impact of your work on those involved, as well as on your own practice, partner collaborators or organisations. For instance, will your activity change people's perceptions on a particular topic? Think about how you, and other libraries, could draw learning from your activity for future projects.

Budget

As you develop your idea, you should also consider how much your proposal might cost, for instance do you need to budget for fees for collaborators or marketing and production costs? It will be important that you can justify each cost and you're clear on why it is needed.