

PARTNERS IN PRACTICE:

Community Toolkit

Impacting lives within our local communities through reverse volunteering



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PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

Universities are uniquely positioned to create civic impact, not only through education and research but through active engagement with the local communities they serve. By working in partnership with local organisations, public bodies, and community groups, universities can help co-create solutions that reflect lived experiences and align with shared community priorities.

The purpose of this three in one toolkit is to share well-tested, practical guidance for addressing identified community issues and bringing them to a realistic resolution by utilising partnerships as well as the resources available within higher education institutions. Drawing on the learnings from two Reverse Volunteering pilot projects, This toolkit offers support in project planning, project implementation and project evaluation.



REVERSE VOLUNTEERING

Reverse volunteering describes a two-way model where university staff volunteer their time and expertise within the university, drawing on the university's resources to support underserved community groups, offering structured guidance and connection in relevant areas. At the same time, members of these underserved groups also voluntarily giving their time to engage with and learn from the programme, contributing their lived experiences, insights, and expertise to further enrich the learning space.

What makes this model distinctive is that staff add value without stepping outside their usual professional context and are able to see the power and the importance of volunteering by directly working with the beneficiary, while participants actively contribute to their own development by taking part in meaningful, voluntary learning. Framing participation as a form of volunteering recognises the value of the participants' time and contributions, reinforces their agency, and encourages a sense of shared purpose.

THREE TOOLKITS

1

University Outreach

Guidance for universities, anchor institutions, and large employers on how to engage with community organisations that want to make a civic impact in their local communities.

2

Community Organisations

Guidance for community organisations in approaching universities, public sector institutions, and education providers with proposals for collaborative projects rooted in community needs.

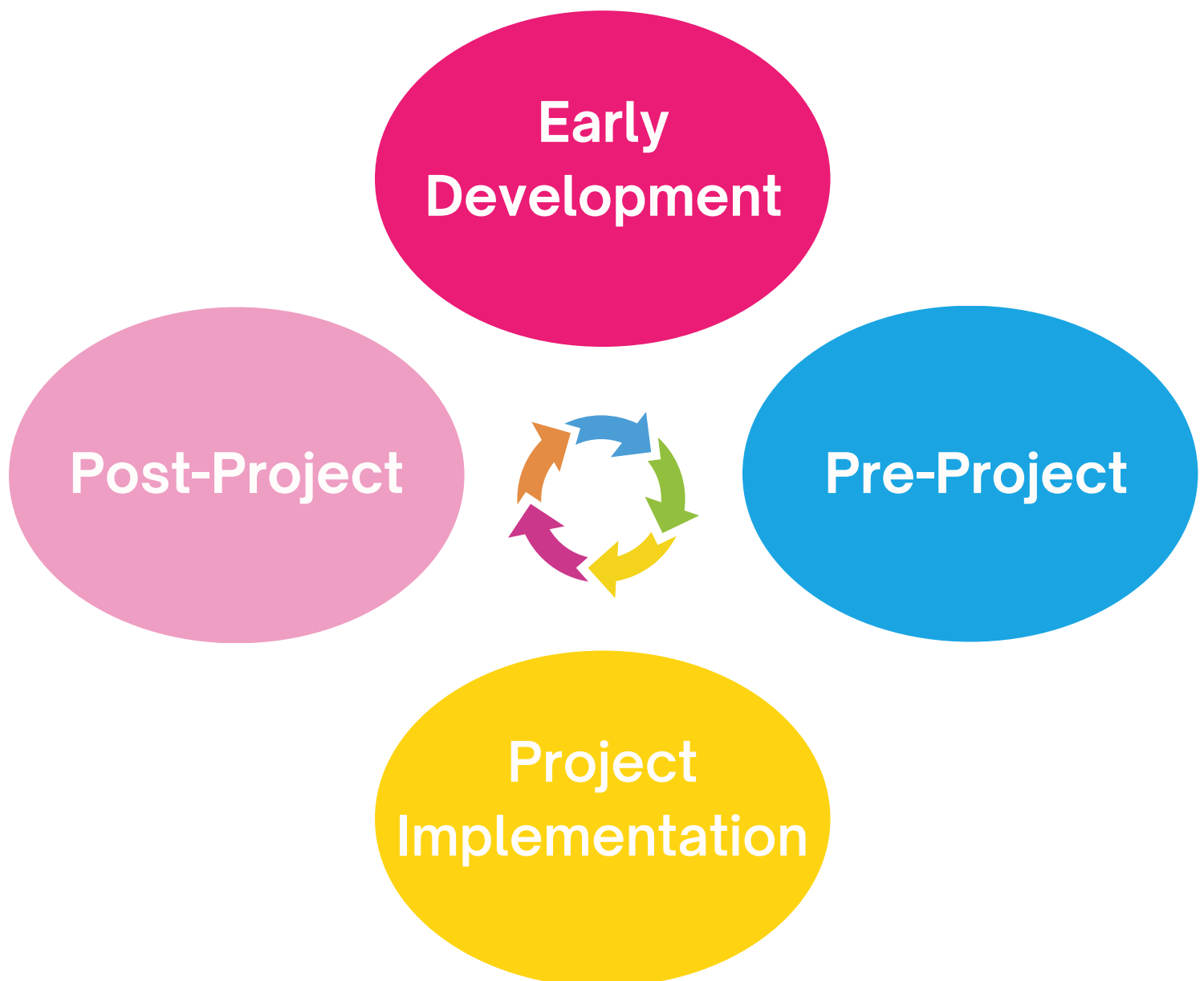
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Measuring Impact

Evaluation tools and techniques to help universities and community organisations assess the civic impact of their projects, with an emphasis on both outcomes and relationships.

TOOLKIT DESIGN

Each toolkit provides practical guidance for all stages of a civic engagement project: from the early stages of development, project planning, and project implementation, to project evaluation. By following these steps, universities and community organisations can ensure that their projects are well-planned, effectively executed, and meaningfully evaluated for lasting community impact.



PILOT PROJECTS

These toolkits draw on insights and lessons learned following the implementation of two pilot projects delivered at Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in 2025. Both projects used a reverse volunteering approach, a unique concept developed during the project design phase that involves participants volunteering their time and skills to engage in meaningful learning experiences. The dual approach of staff volunteering their time and participants contributing their perspectives and insights creates a collaborative learning environment and fosters a rich exchange of knowledge.

Reverse Volunteering In Action:

Helping People Who Have Experienced Long-term Unemployment Prepare For Work

Early community listening done in collaboration with partner Abbey People identified that almost 20% of individuals who experience long-term unemployment in the Abbey Ward area (ONS 2023 Labour Force Survey), face a range of barriers. Colleagues from across ARU came together to develop a response to the complex and often overlooked barriers faced by people who have been out of work long term.

This response took the form of a five-day programme for participants, offering experience of work and employability support.



Reverse Volunteering Pathways To Practice:

Helping Medics From Refugee And Migrant Backgrounds Navigate Barriers To Practicing Medicine In The UK.

Community Listening done with partners highlighted that medics from refugee and migrant backgrounds who are currently unable to practice in the UK face a complex array of challenges. Having uncovered the skills and potential of these medics and the barriers to practicing medicine in the UK that exist for them, ARU medics came together to identify institutional resources which can be aligned towards addressing these challenges, leading to the design of this pilot.

The pilot event included a series of expert talks from ARU Medics, practical guidance for the requalification process and opportunities for networking and knowledge exchange.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1

Listening to our communities:

Develop the projects collaboratively with communities. This includes hosting community listening events to gain insights from the groups involved, and ensuring the project responds to real needs and lived experiences.

2

Plan your time:

Strong relationships need time to develop. Effective partnerships are based on trust, clear responsibilities, and shared decision-making. Be realistic when planning a project - consider what is achievable within the available time and resources. Factor in flexibility to adapt to unforeseen challenges.

3

Mutual benefit:

Ensure the project delivers value for all partners – universities, community organisations and the community or individuals involved.

4

Clear objectives and outcomes:

Define your project goals early using SMART goals to ensure your civic engagement project is purposeful and impactful. Prioritise goals that support skill development, strengthen community connections or enhance mutual learning. Review and adapt goals regularly to respond to feedback or evolving needs.

5

Sustainability:

Design initiatives with the long-term goal in mind, while building lasting relationships that can lead to ongoing collaborations or future projects.

6

Accessibility:

Identify and remove barriers to participation by considering the communities involved. This may include offering language support (e.g., interpreters), choosing accessible venues, providing travel assistance and childcare options, and reasonable adjustments for participants with disabilities.

7

Ongoing evaluation:

Incorporate evaluations throughout the project. Continuous reflection and learning will help to improve delivery, measure civic impact, and shape future activities.

TOOLKIT 1:

UNIVERSITIES

How can universities collaborate with community organisations that want to make a civic impact in their local communities?

This toolkit is designed to support other universities in developing outreach programmes or projects that meaningfully engage and support local communities. Drawing on insights from previous pilot projects, it offers practical guidance for planning, delivering, and sustaining community-focused initiatives. Whether you are launching a new project or refining an existing one, the toolkit provides flexible, actionable steps to support effective collaboration and lasting impact.



EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Universities can benefit from collaborating with community organisations helping to strengthen their civic role, expand community participation and build trust within local communities. These partnerships offer opportunities to apply academic knowledge in real-world settings, address societal challenges, and support underrepresented groups. By working together, universities and community organisations can co-create inclusive programmes that reflect community priorities, enrich learning, and deliver lasting, mutual impact.

Lay the groundwork for a collaborative relationship and meaningful community engagement.

Understand the local community:

- Clearly define your purpose and understand the local community's needs, demographics and key challenges. This can be done using the salient process of **Community Listening**, more about this in the **Resources** section.
- What is the purpose of the project?
- Who should be involved?
- Who will benefit from the project?
- What level of engagement are you hoping for?

Identify Potential Partners:

- Start by identifying community organisations that support your target audience.
- Understand the shared goals, community needs and how potential collaborations can benefit the organisation and their community.

Initiate relationships and conversations:

- Establish mutual trust and transparency from the start. When approaching a community organisation, be clear about what your university aims to achieve, why it matters, and how a partnership could help.
- Community organisations will all work differently with varying capacity and resources available – take time to understand the organisation and what they hope to achieve.

Resources:

- Does your project need funding? If so, where are you going to seek funding?
- Consider seeking funding for projects from research councils, public bodies, private foundations, charities, other institutions or industry partnerships.
- Do you have the capacity and resources to deliver the project effectively, including staff availability and institutional support?

PRE-PROJECT

Plan an inclusive and well-organised outreach activity in collaboration with partners.

Developing connections:

- After initiating early conversations with local community organisations, ensure the project aligns with the community's needs. Establish these connections early to co-create goals, shape activities, and foster mutual trust.
- Understanding the communities involved is essential. Consider participant demographics, such as educational, professional or cultural backgrounds.

Roles and Responsibilities:

- Who will lead the logistics, communication, and content delivery? How often will you meet with the community organisations involved?
- Consider who will be involved in leading the project or hosting sessions – invite speakers and hosts who reflect diverse backgrounds, knowledge or relevant experiences. As a university, you have access to a wide range of expertise to enhance your project.

Planning:

- Be flexible during the planning process and allow time for adapting to difficult circumstances – it may take longer than expected to get the project started. If the timeline shifts too much, people may drop out and be less engaged in the project.
- Include communication plans for regular updates to stakeholders and conduct risk assessments in collaboration with health and safety teams.
- Once the project is developed, create a clear itinerary, agree with all hosts and send it out to participants in advance.

Marketing:

- Engage communities early to identify interested participants.
- Once the project is designed, marketing to local newspapers and media could expand the impact of the project, improve participation by staff and potentially increase financial support. Share specific details including location, time and dates.
- Prioritise direct outreach to departments and individuals over broad internal marketing for stronger engagement and a greater understanding of the project.

Accessibility:

- Make sure venues, resources, and sessions are accessible to all participants, including those with long-term health conditions or support needs. Provide necessary accommodations and conduct risk assessments to ensure inclusive participation.

Project support:

- Use targeted outreach rather than relying on mass emails. Connect directly with interested departments, individuals, and local media. Create clear, specific marketing materials and develop a budget covering venues, resources, and participant support (e.g. travel or lunch).
- Provide necessary training for the staff involved.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Deliver an engaging and meaningful project that centres participant experience and learning.

Inductions and introductions:

- If applicable, consider a short induction before project events to help participants familiarise themselves with the venue, team, and programme.
- Open the event with a clear overview of the aims, schedule, staff roles, and participant introductions to set expectations and ease nerves.
- Advise participants of any health and safety procedures.

Supportive space:

- Foster active participation through interactive sessions, such as group discussions, Q&A panels, and practical workshops.
- Ensure supportive facilitators are available to guide and encourage everyone, especially quieter participants.
- Prioritise wellbeing, including regular breaks, access to quiet areas and flexibility to adapt the project on the day based on the community's needs.

Networking:

- Offer informal networking opportunities to encourage peer-to-peer support and foster relationships that may extend beyond the event.

Real-time feedback:

- Collect feedback from participants throughout the event, through quick surveys, informal conversations and observations. This ensures that any issues are immediately addressed, and participants feel heard.

Supporting staff and partners:

- Ensure university staff are briefed, present and welcoming, especially if attendees are unfamiliar with academic settings.
- Create a safe and open environment where everyone feels heard.
- Work with the community organisation to encourage attendance and engagement.

Evaluations:

- Utilise a variety of approaches to evaluate the project, including project evaluations. This could include surveys, interviews and focus groups. Etc.
- Verbal feedback may allow participants to express their feedback while limiting language or writing barriers.

POST-PROJECT

Continue the momentum of the event, gather feedback and explore the next steps with the community organisation and participants.

Feedback and evaluation:

- Collect feedback from all stakeholders, including staff, the project team, the community organisation and participants.
- Conduct project evaluations. Encourage participants to engage in the evaluation feedback and surveys to gain meaningful insights from the participants.
- Reflect internally by discussing as a team what your university learned from the experience, what worked well and what you want to carry forward into future projects.

Resources and outcomes:

- Share the materials and resources from the event with the participants. Prepare a debrief email to send these resources and the evaluation forms.
- Share the outcomes internally with the rest of the university to encourage other departments to get involved in future projects or design their own projects. Share the findings with the wider community through blogs and social media posts.

Document learnings:

- After the project, compile findings from the evaluation phase and share the results with stakeholders, funders, and participants. Use this information to refine and improve future iterations of the project.
- Recognise community contributions meaningfully.
- Create a report capturing key insights and lessons learned. Share the report with other teams across the university for broader learning.
- If the project was externally funded, ensure reports meet funder requirements and are submitted on time.

Moving forward:

- After the project, it's important to debrief as a team and with the community organisation to evaluate the project and partnership.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting with stakeholders to discuss the project, explore next steps and consider future opportunities.
- Encourage participants to stay involved through organised groups, mentoring, or invitations to future initiatives. Signpost community organisations or individuals to further resources or networks they can access beyond the project.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM PILOT PROJECTS

Roles and responsibilities:

Ensure you have assigned clear roles and responsibilities within the project team. Coordinating the project in teams of two or more could improve continuity and provide backup in instances of unavailability.

Programme design:

Programme design can be complex, requiring adjustments at any stage. For example, participants may drop out once the project has started, and staff volunteers need to be informed as soon as possible. Projects should be designed with the community in mind.

Logistics:

If the planning phase is too long or drawn out, the goal post may keep shifting. Participants may drop out due to various reasons, and staff may become unavailable. Alternative provisions should be put in place to accommodate any last-minute cancellations.

Volunteer recruitment:

When recruiting staff volunteers, detailed information should be provided on project locations, times, dates, etc. It proves more productive to contact staff individually rather than using mass emails. This would ensure a greater understanding and commitment to the project.

Individualised approach:

Participants' personal situations may require more in-depth support. A mix of face-to-face sessions, follow-up emails and a contact point available by email and phone may be required. Creating personalised agendas or tailored programmes may help accommodate different individuals.

Incentivising participation:

Staff participation may improve if volunteering incentives are emphasised, such as recognising their contributions as part of their professional development. Digital badges or certificates of participation may encourage participants to get involved in projects.

TOOLKIT 2:

COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

How can community organisations open their doors to universities and other public institutions to create practical projects, especially for the communities they know best?



This toolkit is designed to help community organisations confidently approach universities or other public bodies with ideas for civic development. Universities, particularly those involved in the Civic University Network, have made public commitments to address inequalities and work in collaboration with their communities.

EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Community organisations can benefit from partnering with universities by accessing valuable resources, research expertise, and new opportunities for the people they support. These collaborations can boost your organisation's visibility, attract support for your cause, and create practical pathways for community members. Working together, universities and community groups can co-design initiatives that reflect shared values, enhance impact, and drive lasting, meaningful change.

Lay the groundwork for a collaborative relationship with an institution that aligns with your mission.

Conduct a Needs Assessment:

- Clearly define your community's needs and priorities by conducting a thorough needs assessment.
- What issues do you want to address?
- Who should be involved?
- What level of engagement are you hoping for?

Identify Potential Partners:

- Start by identifying universities or partners whose missions and values align with your organisation's goals.
- You need to understand the shared goals, community needs and how potential collaborations align with their civic mission.

Initiate relationships and conversations:

- Approach the right departments (e.g., public engagement, research, employability teams) to initiate conversations about potential collaborations.
- Establish mutual trust and transparency from the start. When approaching a university, be clear about what your organisation aims to achieve, why it matters, and how you think a partnership could help.

Collaborations:

- Consider and highlight what you both offer, including community relationships, networks, expertise and facilities.
- Collaborations could range from co-developing educational programmes, offering mentorships, conducting joint research, to hosting community events. For example, universities can provide research support to address local issues, while community organisations can guide universities in understanding the needs of marginalised groups.

PRE-PROJECT

Work with the institution to co-design a project that is inclusive, achievable, and mutually beneficial.

Develop connections :

- After developing initial partnerships, collaboratively refine your ideas, define the scope of the project, discuss specific goals and understand what success looks like. Ensure your priorities remain central throughout project planning.
- Clarify roles and advocate for your community's voice to stay at the heart of the project.

Community engagement events:

- Work with partners to design inclusive engagement activities, such as listening sessions, roundtable discussions, or community learning events. Use your experience to help shape the format, content, and approach so the project genuinely reflects the needs and perspectives of the intended audience.

Project roles:

- Who will represent your organisation and act as the main point of contact with the university and participants?
- Do you have existing relationships with participants that could support recruitment efforts?
- How often will you meet with stakeholders, partners, or as an organisation to support planning and delivery?

Accessibility:

- Consider the accessibility of the participants using your specific knowledge of the audience. You may be better positioned to understand the barriers to the participants and advocate for adjustments or support that your participants might need, such as learning accommodations, travel considerations, cultural considerations or other specific barriers.

Communication

- Schedule regular check-ins to maintain open communication and ensure alignment throughout the project.
- Use a wide range of communication channels. For example, newsletters, magazines, emails, Twitter, LinkedIn, and press releases.
- When contacting participants, take a personalised approach to increase engagement and relevance.

Outreach and recruitment:

- Promote the project through your existing networks and proactively reach out to other organisations or community leaders to identify individuals interested in participating. Direct outreach may be more effective. After initial contact, follow up with potential participants using multiple methods with reminders closer to the project.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Support the delivery of an inclusive, community-informed project that adds value for your participants.

Encourage attendance:

- Maintain contact with the participants in the lead up to the project, providing reminders and checking in with participants ahead of time.
- Provide reassurance or practical support (e.g., directions, transport information) to reduce barriers to attendance. Providing the agenda before the project can help participants know what to expect and feel more confident.
- Be prepared to resolve problems and worries in the lead up to the event and on the day.

Be present on the day:

- If possible, attend the project to offer a familiar face, help participants feel welcomed, and bridge your community with the organisation.
- Be available throughout the project to offer informal support, help participants navigate the space or activities, and encourage participation.
- Be proactive in addressing any issues that arise during the project.
- Take photos (with consent) and collate quotes to use in future promotions or reporting. This also helps capture the event's atmosphere and impact.

Gather feedback in real-time:

- If present at the project, use informal check-ins or short forms to understand how people are experiencing the project.
- Monitor accessibility and inclusion during the project to ensure the project feels welcoming and accessible. During the project, you can provide feedback to the staff and advocate if adjustments are needed in real-time.

Support reflection:

- Encourage participants to share their views and reflect on their experiences during the project and at the end of the day.
- What did the participants gain from the project?
- What support do the participants still need?

POST-PROJECT

Reflect, follow up, and explore how to develop or maintain the relationship with your institutional partner.

Provide feedback:

- Share honest, constructive feedback with the university, highlighting what worked and what could be improved. You may be better placed to gather participant insights, as they might feel more comfortable speaking with you.
- Encourage participants to engage with the university in the post-evaluation feedback and surveys to gain meaningful insights from the participants.

Celebrate success:

- Acknowledge what went well and share the outcomes with your wider community using newsletters, direct updates to the community or social media posts. This can build trust, highlight your work and inspire future involvement.
- Reflect internally by discussing as a team what your organisation learned from the experience, what worked well and what you want to carry forward into future projects.

Stay in touch:

- After the project, it's important to debrief as a team, with the university and with the partners to evaluate the project and partnership.
- Schedule a follow-up meeting with stakeholders to discuss the project, explore next steps and consider future opportunities. Participants may require the partner to provide more in-depth support.
- Follow up with the participants after the project to see how the project affected their personal development.

Moving forward:

- After the project, work together with the university to publish a report that highlights the findings, successes and lessons learned. You may choose to create your own report for your organisation, especially if this is part of a wider project.
- Use the impact of the project and project report to consider seeking funding for your own organisation and future projects.

KEY LEARNINGS FROM PILOT PROJECTS

Roles and responsibilities:

Ensure you have assigned clear roles and responsibilities agreed between your organisation and the university early on. This ensures smooth collaboration and avoids confusion during project planning and execution.

Programme design:

Programme design can be complex, requiring adjustments at any stage. When designing the project with the university, ensure it aligns with your community's needs and use your unique knowledge of the community to shape the content, structure, and format of the project. Consider who the community is and whether a progressive approach is required to adjust to the project.

Logistics:

If the planning phase is too long or drawn out, the goal post may keep shifting. Participants may drop out for various reasons. Maintain regular contact to keep them informed and engaged leading up to the project.

Individualised approach:

Engage participants with a personalised approach, considering their individual needs and backgrounds. Some participants required more in-depth support from the partners than originally expected. Tailor your outreach and recruitment strategies to ensure inclusivity and relevance for different groups.

Reasonable adjustments:

Some of the barriers to participation may include disability adjustments, childcare provisions, financial constraints and transport options. You may be better positioned to understand the unique barriers to your community and can advocate for these needs to the university.

Sustainability and long-term impact:

Focus not only on the immediate outcomes but also consider how the partnership can create lasting benefits for the community. Plan for follow-up activities to maintain engagement and track long-term impact. Participants may be more likely to get involved if they can see the long-term vision, as opposed to one-off support.

TOOLKIT 3:

MEASURING IMPACT

For both universities and community organisations, measuring impact is essential to reflect the success of the project, adapt future projects, demonstrate value to funders and establish a pathway for improvement. This toolkit outlines how to capture both quantitative outcomes and qualitative feedback, ensuring that civic impact is measurable, meaningful, and actionable.



EARLY DEVELOPMENT AND PRE-PROJECT

Consider the end goal and desired impact of the project from the start.

Agree on shared goals:

- Develop clear goals and a mutual definition of what success looks like to all stakeholders. This may be dependent on the community being supported.

Define the intended impact:

- What does meaningful impact look like? For example, consider the impact on confidence, community, personal skills, employment, and belonging.
- Consider both short-term and long-term impacts.

Key performance indicators (KPIs):

- Clearly define KPIs and key outcome variables to measure the success of the event. For example, confidence, number of participants completing the event, participant satisfaction, skills gained, employment or education progression and long-term engagement.

Co-design evaluation questions:

- Collaborate with participants, partners and universities to reflect the lived experience to ensure the evaluation reflects their priorities and not just institutional metrics.

Design inclusive tools:

- Ensure evaluation methods are accessible, inclusive, culturally sensitive and use multiple formats.
- Use a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods.

Assign clear responsibilities:

- Integrate evaluations from the outset of the project planning.
- Decide who is responsible for designing the tools, collecting, analysing, and reporting on the data.

Evaluations should be completed pre-project and post-project to assess the short-term change following the project. Evaluations could be focused on positive feedback, areas for improvement and ideas for future practice regarding what would be beneficial for participants.

EVALUATION TECHNIQUES



Verbal Feedback

In-person feedback allowed participants to express their feedback while limiting language or writing barriers.



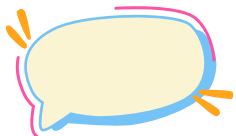
Surveys

Including ratings and open-ended questions to collate feedback on the project.



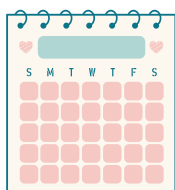
Interviews or Focus Groups

Gain a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, particularly their challenges, perceived value, and suggestions for improvement.



Stakeholder Feedback

Collate feedback from all groups involved including staff, partners, project team and participants.



Longer-Term Feedback

Plan early for how you'll assess long-term impact. This may include following up with participants at set intervals (e.g. 3, 6, or 12 months) to track progress.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS:

- o Has the project benefited the participants involved?
- o Has the project contributed to lasting change in the community?
- o Did the project achieve its objectives and outcomes?
- o Has the project influenced policy?

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Collect data in a respectful, non-intrusive way that builds trust and does not disrupt engagement.

Be transparent and ethical:

- Obtain informed consent from participants when collecting data.
- Be clear about how information will be used and shared.
- Ensure confidentiality and data protection compliance.

Baseline assessment:

- Collecting data at the start of the project will provide a baseline level of the participants' starting point, allowing a better comparison to post-event results and measuring progress. For example, use a short questionnaire with simple rating questions.

Quick feedback mechanisms:

- Use evaluation techniques that are quick to gather feedback and low burden on the participants while still gaining in-depth and thoughtful feedback. For example, post-it notes or casual conversations.
- Have a plan in place to act quickly if feedback reveals a problem during the project.

Alternative feedback:

- Gathering verbal feedback during the event to allow participants to openly express how they are feeling without experiencing barriers to writing their responses, e.g., language or writing barriers.
- If your project runs over multiple days, track the engagement across each day including attendance, dropouts or active engagement.

Informal insights:

- Assign a member of the project team to record real-time observations during the event and provide informal insights into what worked well, verbal feedback from the participants and areas for improvement.
- Include participant reactions, engagement levels and quotes.

Stakeholder feedback:

- Don't forget to incorporate the perspectives of staff delivering the project or partners involved.
- Encourage brief reflective logs or notes during the project delivery to capture their evolving views.

POST-PROJECT

Analyse and communicate the civic impact – both internally and externally.

Request feedback:

- Gather feedback from the project team, partners, staff, hosts and participants to gather well-rounded feedback for all groups involved. Be prepared to follow up via calls or reminders, as initial feedback requests may be missed after the event.

Follow-up support:

- Schedule follow-up calls or emails to collect additional insights, support relationship-building, and assess any emerging long-term impacts. This shows continued commitment and opens the door for future collaboration.

Review findings:

- Analyse the data to identify successes, areas for improvement, and future opportunities.
- Compare project findings with baseline data and original goals to assess success and highlight any unexpected outcomes.
- Reflect on what worked well for all groups involved, and explore potential avenues for further support, events, or initiatives.

Share findings:

- Disseminate findings after the event with appropriate groups through internal reports, external networks, the civic network and the wider community. The impact of the event can support funding applications, inform future projects and decision-making.
- Use accessible formats, such as infographics, short blogs, or presentations to broaden the reach and strengthen support for future projects.

Track long-term impact:

- Perform evaluations at a specified time period after the event (e.g. 3 months, 6 months, 1 year) to track outcomes.
- Establish goals for continued engagement, the long-term impact or behaviour changes. Define indicators of success early to make this process meaningful and measurable.

Reflect and plan:

- Host an internal debrief session to reflect on team learning and operational insights.
- Discuss which practices to keep, adapt, or remove, and document these for future project design. Include community partners where possible to co-reflect on shared outcomes.

RESOURCES: EXAMPLE SURVEYS

Below are two sample surveys used in our pilot projects. These examples can be adapted to suit different project types, participant groups, or evaluation goals.



EXAMPLE 1. LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYED

- 1 How confident do you feel about returning to work?
- 2 How would you rate your CV and job application skills?
- 3 How familiar are you with workplace Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles?
- 4 What are your biggest concerns about returning to work?
- 5 What do you hope to gain from this programme?

EXAMPLE 2. REFUGEE MEDICS

- 1 Was the event helpful to you? Feel free to share what you found useful or anything that stood out to you.
- 2 Is there anything we could have done better or differently to improve the event?
- 3 What kind of support do you think [University name] could offer you going forward?

RESOURCES: EVENT CHECKLIST

When planning your project event, use a checklist to track tasks, assign responsibilities, and ensure all logistical, accessibility, and communication needs are covered.

Event Checklist			
Title of Event		Cleaning/heating/air con	
Date/times		IT Support	
Venue/room including set up		Student ambassadors	
Description		Parking	
Hosts/presenters		Signage	
Lunch or catering		Event material	
Bookings/invites		Running order	
Design		Feedback	
Security		Budget	
Reception		Other	

RESOURCES: RISK ASSESSMENT

When planning a project, a risk assessment should be completed in collaboration with relevant teams such as the Health and Safety team or line managers. Use this template to identify and manage potential risks related to your event or project. The risk assessment helps ensure the safety, accessibility, and wellbeing of all participants. It also helps to decide whether extra control measures need to be put into place and what the timescale for doing that should be.

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you doing already?	Risk before mitigations		
			Likelihood	Impact	Risk Rating

Risk after mitigations			What are the hazards?	Action by whom?	Action by when?	Done
Likelihood	Impact	Risk Rating				

EXAMPLES:

- o Fire safety
- o Unauthorised access
- o Getting lost
- o Trip hazards or uneven flooring
- o Medical emergencies
- o Incidents with the project team
- o Dietary requirements or allergies
- o Health conditions
- o Social discomfort or anxieties
- o Technology failure

RESOURCES: COMMUNITY LISTENING

Community listening is an important skill for effective community engagement and is key to understanding your local community. It involves listening to the voices within the community without bias or prejudice to understand the experiences, hopes, concerns, needs and perspectives of the community. Community listening can be done in various ways, and when carried out properly, can build trust and strengthen connections with the community.



Things to consider:

- Community listening can be done at different stages of the project. For example, during the planning process, implementation or evaluation phases. It may also be helpful if there is a crisis at any point.
- Choosing the location is dependent on the community's characteristics, the type of listening activity and the objectives. Ultimately, it is important that the space selected is safe, accessible and comfortable for participants.
- Consider who will conduct the community listening, ensuring the process is effective, inclusive and respectful. Examples include trained facilitators, community listening specialists, consultants, multi-stakeholder teams or academic researchers.

CONCLUSION

Whether you are a university looking to strengthen your local partnerships or a community organisation seeking university support, the resources in these toolkits offer a shared roadmap to civic impact. The toolkits are designed to help both universities and community organisations to design, deliver, and evaluate impactful civic engagement projects.

The toolkits have been shaped by the experiences and lessons learned from two pilot projects delivered at Anglia Ruskin University in 2025. By drawing on this practical experience, the toolkits offer flexible guidance to support impactful collaboration and meaningful civic engagement.

Universities and community organisations each bring valuable knowledge, resources and lived experience. By working together from the early planning stages through to creating ambitious post-project plans, both can create projects together that are responsive to the community's needs with mutual benefit.

We encourage other universities and community organisations to share their own experiences, adapt the tools to develop their own projects, and continue building a culture of civic engagement. Collaborations are key to addressing shared challenges and creating a long-term impact.

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