

Civic Capabilities Framework

Authors

David Owen, Consultant

Gemma Adams, National Coordinating
Centre for Public Engagement

Zoe Williamson, National Coordinating
Centre for Public Engagement

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National Civic
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Background

The National Civic Impact Accelerator (NCIA) was a three-year programme to gather evidence and intelligence of what works, share civic innovations, and provide universities across England with frameworks and tools to deliver meaningful, measurable civic strategies and activities, running from 2023-2025. The programme was funded by Research England, part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It drove collaboration and policy and practice innovation, involving universities, local government, business groups, and the community sector to inform place-based transformations.

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Introduction

The Civic Capabilities Framework is intended to support the professional development of staff in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) who are actively working across different groups, organisations and disciplines to connect people, overcome project silos, and form collaborative partnerships that deliver social outcomes. This might include those who work in research, teaching or professional service roles.

People who operate in these ‘in-between spaces’ are known by various names, including boundary spanners, knowledge brokers, intermediaries, bridge builders, facilitators, connectors, liaisons, and mobilisers. Their ways of working aren’t articulated within formal role descriptions but are often found between the lines of a job description and indicate a set of interpersonal skills and values that underpin how an individual approaches their work.

Things they may do include:

- **Connecting organisations:** working across traditional divides, for example, between academia and industry, science and policy, institutions and communities.
- **Bridge building and mediating:** navigating different understandings and expectations, ensuring that people feel heard and understood.
- **Cultivating relationships:** building networks and helping identify resources and opportunities for collaboration.
- **Managing tensions:** being proactive in clarifying ambiguities and balancing competing interests and priorities.
- **Facilitating people and groups:** bringing diverse perspectives together.
- **Acting with integrity and care:** to help build trust and ensure that initiatives and actions are inclusive and socially responsible.

Why does this work matter?

People who contribute to projects and initiatives as outlined above often go beyond their formal responsibilities to make a difference. Their work is vital in a system that has long favoured specialisation at the expense of the ability to see the big picture, or to adapt and operate effectively in very different contexts. All of this requires emotional intelligence, the ability to refresh mental models, agility, and the ability to learn from experience (Whittemore, 2023).

While many authors note the difficulty of measuring and attributing the impact of such roles (Bornbaum et al., 2015; Baxter et al., 2024), there is clear recognition of how boundary-spanning actions contribute to improved social outcomes across a wide range of disciplines (Bornbaum et al., 2015; Baxter et al., 2024; Pattinson et al., 2024). Studies in fields such as implementation science, patient involvement, community development, and innovation studies have each examined and shown how these activities contribute to building trust, capacity, and distributing knowledge (Delozier and Burbach, 2021; Delozier et al., 2021; Hatch, 2023; Liljeroos-Cork et al., 2024; Traynor et al., 2014; Stephens, 2024; Nederhand et al., 2018; Dorey et al., 2024).

About this framework

In this framework, we seek to articulate the key knowledge, capabilities, and attributes required to facilitate effective alignment between the civic and research realms. The framework is designed to inform training and development, support integration with existing HR/Staff development frameworks, and enable individuals in these roles to reflect on, articulate, and develop their skills.

Given the nature of these individuals and their roles, it would be counterintuitive to offer a framework that imposes structure and function on roles that derive value from

deviation and adaptability. Therefore, when engaging with this framework, we encourage you to adopt the following perspectives:

- The framework aims to capture the essence of boundary spanning (trust building, collaboration, alignment, resilience), but it does not intend to be comprehensive.
- Each domain relates to the others. Just as feathers on a bird serve multiple purposes (warmth, flight, display), so too can any element of the framework, e.g., *vulnerability*, can serve various functions (building trust, belonging, collaboration); collaboration can both be a skill and a mindset.
- Where we have presented a development matrix, the invitation is not to assess your fixed position but to notice how you might move fluidly in response to context. e.g., *For example, how in what situations might you be able to perform better than others? How might attributes express themselves differently depending on the needs of the group?*

A core principle of this framework is therefore flexibility; we encourage you to adapt it to your context. The development matrix is not intended as a ladder or to assume progression or hierarchy. We encourage you to use this to notice patterns; it is okay to return to 'emerging' again when the context changes. We also offer a set of core building blocks (see Appendix A) that you can select and combine in ways that best fit your context, and we will continue to develop this framework and support its implementation with those working in this space.

Use of AI in developing this framework

This framework was created through an iterative process drawing on practitioner insight, relevant literature, role descriptions, and reflective dialogue with AI. The core structure and conceptual foundations were developed by people; AI was introduced after this foundation was established, to generate draft progression statements (Emerging, Developing, Practising, Modelling). These drafts were reviewed, adapted, or discarded based on professional judgement and relevance to real practice. For certain attributes (e.g., empathy, resilience etc.), we also drew on theoretical models

outlining developmental stages. These insights were then used to adjust and deepen the indicators, with AI supporting language exploration rather than content generation.

Throughout, AI served as a creative partner, helping to realise a vision and refine phrasing, rather than as the source of the ideas themselves.

Core Framework

Knowledge

Engagement theory and practice

A grounding in the ideas, traditions, and practical approaches that shape meaningful engagement.

Organisational learning

An appreciation of how organisations evolve and learn. How culture, structures, and relationships can be supported to change.

Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

Understanding how power, identity, and lived experience shape participation. Knowledge of how to build systems and processes that people can genuinely experience as being for them.

Knowledge mobilisation

Insight and understanding of how ideas and evidence travel between different worlds research, policy, practice, and community.

Local and contextual knowledge

Familiarity with the histories, relationships, and identities that define a place.

Organisational and sectoral understanding

Awareness of the key policy agendas, institutional priorities, and the forces shaping different sectors.

Capabilities

Working with people

An ability to build trust, work alongside others, and create conditions where people feel able to contribute, connect, and grow. Investing in relationships and long-term partnership.

Strategic thinking

Designing and overseeing initiatives. Seeing the wider system, anticipating risks, and setting priorities. Shapes direction across teams and partners.

Programme design

Designing and overseeing initiatives. Balancing planning with adaptability and bringing together multiple perspectives and ideas to form coherent programmes.

Advocacy, engagement and influencing

Shaping conversations, decisions, and priorities in ways that build understanding and momentum. Ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of the public meaningfully shape strategies, programmes, and decision-making.

Coordination and communication

Facilitating connections and sharing information clearly, aligning effort across teams and partners, and enabling joined up working in complex environments.

Evaluation and learning

Establishing effective mechanisms to understand what's working, what isn't, and how insight can meaningfully shape practice and decisions. Building capability through training, mentoring, and shared learning.

Resource and governance

Managing budgets, securing resources, and mitigating risk responsibly. Using time, resources, and relationships with care, foresight, and responsibility.

Attributes

Empathetic

Able to recognise and appreciate the emotions, perspectives, and realities of others. Responds with care, patience, and genuine regard.

Curiosity

Open to different ways of seeing and understanding the world. Welcomes new ideas, asks thoughtful questions, and remains willing to learn and unlearn considering new insight. Listens to evidence, experience, and lived expertise.

Reflective

Takes time to notice what is happening. Learns from experience and adapts thoughtfully over time. Uses reflection, feedback, and evaluation to adapt practice, strengthen decisions, and deepen understanding.

Resilient

Stays steady through uncertainty and challenge. Holds to values, seeks support when needed, and adapts with humility and care.

Authentic

Acts with integrity and consistency, aligning behaviour and decisions with personal and shared values. Creates clarity and trust by being congruent in intention and action.

Relational

Values connection and shared purpose. Invests in relationships built on respect, listening, and mutual support, recognising that progress is shaped by how we work together.

Development Matrix

Knowledge: The theories and knowledge that may inform your work.

	Emerging	Developing	Practising	Modelling
Engagement theory and practice	Aware of different approaches to engagement and the principles behind them.	Begins to apply methods thoughtfully, seeking guidance and noticing what works in different situations.	Adapts engagement approaches to fit context, purpose, and people; reflects on practice to refine judgement.	Helps shape engagement culture and practice across teams or institutions; supports others to develop confidence and understanding.
Organisational learning	Recognises that organisations evolve and that reflection supports improvement.	Participates in reflective practice and encourages small learning loops within projects or teams.	Builds structures that support learning across teams; understands how inquiry and feedback shape culture.	Cultivates environments where learning, reflection, and adaptation are embedded; supports others to lead learning work.
Equity, Diversity and Inclusion	Understands how inequality can shape experience and participation.	Actively considers inclusion in planning; seeks feedback and evolves practice.	Designs and delivers work that intentionally includes diverse voices and reduces barriers to participation.	Advocates for equity and shifts structures and habits that perpetuate exclusion; supports others to do the same.
Knowledge mobilisation	Understands that knowledge lives differently in research, policy, practice, and community settings.	Begins facilitating connection and translation across different knowledge communities.	Intentionally adapts, contextualises, and translates knowledge to support shared understanding and better decisions.	Builds platforms, processes, and relationships that enable knowledge to travel and be used well across boundaries.
Local knowledge	Aware that place, history, and relationships shape context.	Builds relationships and seeks multiple perspectives to understand a place and its people.	Grounds decisions in local histories, narratives, and assets; honours community expertise.	Ensures community insight shapes strategy and culture; supports others to listen to and work with local knowledge.
Organisational and sectorial understanding	Has a basic awareness of institutional structures and external policy drivers but struggles to navigate them.	Begins to recognise organisational priorities, incentives, and constraints; adapts approaches to align with context.	Adapts to different institutional environments effectively, balancing strategic goals and civic purpose across partners.	Influences institutional and sector strategy; leverages this knowledge to enable long-term civic collaboration and culture change.

Capabilities: The unique way in which you can lead, mobilise and connect others.

	Emerging	Developing	Practising	Modelling
Working with people	Notices differences in how people work and understand how these differences may influence outcomes.	Builds constructive working relationships when conditions feel supportive. Communicates with consideration, offers support where needed, and begins to navigate differences with curiosity and care.	Works confidently with diverse people and perspectives, including in moments of tension or uncertainty. Recognises differences in how people work and can accommodate in a way that maintains trust.	Creates the conditions for others to work well together across boundaries and contexts. Coaches and develops colleagues, enabling people to be their best selves.
Strategic thinking	Understands that activity connects to wider organisational or societal priorities but focuses mainly on immediate tasks.	Begins to link work to wider goals and longer-term thinking. Notices constraints, and opportunities and starting to respond to them.	Anticipates trends and strategic priorities and shapes plans and actively accordingly.	Shapes the strategic direction of engagement across teams and partners. Develops policy and structures that enable effective engagement and supports others to think and act strategically.
Programme design and delivery	Follows basic approaches to design activities and initiatives targeted to a specific audience.	Plans and manages small initiatives. Experiments with different ways of structuring work and involving others in the process.	Designs and delivers complex multi-partner programmes balancing quality, timelines, and stakeholder needs.	Develops frameworks that support thoughtful, inclusive programming across teams or settings. Builds capacity in others and establishes systems for sustainable delivery.
Advocacy, engagement and influencing	Recognises that influence shapes decisions and outcomes and begins to notice where voices are heard or overlooked.	Begins to articulate ideas and speak up for people, groups, or values in appropriate settings. Experiments with framing messages to influence drawing on evidence and lived experience.	Advocates with clarity and makes thoughtful, evidence-informed contributions that strengthen decisions, support equity, and help build shared momentum around common goals.	Expands space for diverse voices, strengthens collective influence, and helps shape narratives and systems so that participation becomes shared and sustained.
Coordination and communication	Shares updates when asked and supports coordination tasks	Communicates clearly and respectfully in familiar contexts. Coordinates tasks	Maintains shared understanding and alignment across teams and partners, including when	Establishes ways of working that make communication open, clear, and timely.

	within a team. Recognises that people may hold different communication preferences and priorities.	and information across people or projects and checks shared understanding.	things change or feel uncertain. Anticipates communication needs and brings people together to support clarity, momentum, and trust.	Creates conditions that help others coordinate confidently and collaborate across boundaries.
Evaluation and learning	Recognises the value of evaluation and learning and begins gathering insight to inform their own practice.	Uses insight, resources and conversations to understand what is working and what could improve. Shares learning informally and contributes to reflection in familiar settings.	Designs and uses meaningful approaches to learning and evaluation across projects. Develops structured learning experiences and supports colleagues to build skills and confidence.	Creates a culture where learning and reflection are normalised and valued. Helps others use evidence, feedback, and lived experience confidently and ethically to strengthen practice and decision-making.
Resource and governance	Understands the importance of responsible practice and follows agreed processes for budgets, risk, safeguarding, and data. Seeks guidance when unsure.	Manages budgets, risks, and resources for defined projects. Makes responsible decisions and asks for support when needed.	Oversees multiple resource streams. Anticipates needs, mitigates risk proactively, and balances ethics, impact, and sustainability.	Builds confidence and capability in others to steward resources well. Shapes systems and norms that support ethical, transparent, and strategic use of time, money, data, and community trust.

Attributes: The values and qualities you bring.

	Emerging	Developing	Practising	Modelling
Empathy	Begins to notice others' emotions and recognises that different people may experience the same situation differently.	Listens with care and begins adjusting communication based on others' emotional cues in familiar contexts. Shows curiosity about how others feel and why.	Adapts communication and behaviour with sensitivity to a range of emotional perspectives, including in challenging or unfamiliar situations. Manages own emotional responses to support constructive interaction.	Demonstrates empathy consistently and helps create emotionally safe environments. Supports others to build emotional insight, compassion, and relational awareness.
Curious	Shows openness to new ideas or unfamiliar perspectives.	Proactively asks questions and seeks to understand diverse perspectives, knowledge, and skills.	Applies curiosity intentionally to problem-solving and learning. Moves comfortably between knowing, not knowing, and exploring uncertainty.	Creates environments that encourage inquiry, reflection, and shared exploration. Invites others to ask questions, share insights, and engage with uncertainty creatively and confidently.
Reflective	Moves through work largely on instinct or routine, with limited pause for sense-making. May notice when something feels "off" or satisfying but hasn't yet developed the habit of exploring why.	Begins pausing to ask what worked, what didn't, and why. Recognises personal tendencies and reactions and starts connecting actions to outcomes. Reflection often happens after the fact.	Actively uses reflection to guide decisions and adapt while things are unfolding. Recognises that understanding is always evolving and increasingly reflects with others.	Uses reflection to expand perspective, deepen self-awareness, and shift patterns of thinking and acting. Reflection becomes a shared practice supporting honesty and growth in self and others. Demonstrates both in-action and after-action reflection with depth.
Resilient	Notices personal reactions to stress and challenge, including emotional highs and lows. May feel stretched or unsettled at times, but stays present and keeps going, can take	Uses simple strategies to manage stress and protect energy. Begins to adjust perspective and recover more quickly after difficulties, learning what helps restore balance.	Learning to ride waves rather than resist them. Difficulty becomes navigable rather than consuming and is navigating ongoing or complex challenges with growing self-awareness and flexibility.	Recognises adversity as a source of depth, connection, and transformation, not just endurance.

	steps to steady themselves moment by moment.			
Authentic	Notices personal values, feelings, and instincts, and begins to sense when behaviour doesn't fully align with them.	Starts expressing needs, preferences, and boundaries more openly, typically in safer spaces, and then gradually in more varied settings.	Acts and communicates in ways that reflect personal values even in challenge or ambiguity. Holds respect for multiple perspectives without losing grounding in one's own.	Lives with inner alignment and relational ease. Contributes to shared spaces where people can show up as they are.
Relational	Notices the importance of trust and connection in shared work. May feel some awkwardness or uncertainty in relational spaces, but shows willingness to listen, include, and be present with others.	Begins to build comfort engaging with others and seeks to understand different perspectives. Learns to stay in conversation through moments of uncertainty and difference, building trust through consistency and openness.	Experiences deeper relational comfort. Honesty, and shared vulnerability begin to feel more natural. Can hold boundaries and care together and works through tension constructively.	Relationships are places of shared responsibility, mutual support, and collective intention. Tends to the relationship as an ongoing commitment, enabling people to act, grow, and navigate challenges together in service of something larger.

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Appendix A: The Root List

The Civic Capabilities Framework is derived from the first three sections of the root list below. As we mentioned in the introduction, several domains not included in the framework might be valuable for your work. We hope that the list below will help the framework evolve and be adapted to different contexts.

The root list is broken down into the following lenses:

Lens	Description	Example dimensions
Knowledge	What you may need to know. The theories, contexts, and systems that inform your work.	Engagement theory, Local knowledge, Organisational change, etc.
Management	The technical and practical abilities that enable you to deliver and manage your work.	Communication, Evaluation, Project management.
Leadership	Competencies that combine skills, knowledge and attributes in a unique way to enable you to lead, connect, and mobilise others.	Strategic thinking, facilitating alignment, responding to feedback
Attributes	The personal qualities and values that shape how you show up in your work.	Empathy, Resilience, Authenticity, Dependability
Practices	What you habitually do to achieve your outcomes	Active listening, building alliances, Offering appreciation
Blind spots	Common traps or risks to awareness	Oversimplification, Burnout, Power hoarding
Purposes	Why your role exists, and the value it brings.	Reducing barriers, creating inclusion, enabling agency

Knowledge	
Engagement theory	Understanding models and theories of deliberation that support inclusive dialogue, collective decision-making, and public engagement.
Public engagement (PE) methods and approaches	Familiarity with a range of techniques that facilitate public engagement from consultation through to co-creation.
Creative engagement techniques	Participatory, arts-based, and imaginative methods that spark dialogue and broaden involvement.
Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)	Knowledge of systemic inequalities and strategies to embed inclusive practices in design and delivery.
Organisational change	Knowledge of how to facilitate culture change in organisations.
Facilitation	Theories and practices that underpin effective group facilitation, from managing dynamics to supporting collaborative outcomes.
Higher education knowledge	Awareness of HE structures, policies, and priorities.
Sectoral knowledge	Awareness of the broader policy, funding, and institutional environments, in which engagement takes place. How these are built and the priorities that have shaped them.
Local knowledge	Insights into the communities, cultures, histories, and assets of the places where engagement takes place.
Cultural and public programming	Understanding how cultural initiatives, events, and programming can foster engagement and social connection.
Education and pedagogy	Familiarity with teaching and learning approaches that can inform how engagement is designed, facilitated, and evaluated.
Marketing and communications	Knowledge of how to reach and engage different audiences, craft clear messages, and use multiple channels effectively.
Commercial awareness	Understanding financial drivers, value propositions, and the wider market context.

Management	
People management	Supporting, motivating, and developing individuals and teams to perform effectively.
Programme design and project delivery	Designing and implementing initiatives that achieve intended outcomes. Managing the full lifecycle of projects.
Coordinating	Conveying information clearly and appropriately in a timely way. Coordinating activities across teams and organisations.
Learning and development	Building others' knowledge and skills through structured training and informal support.
Monitoring and evaluation	Embedding evaluation approaches to help assess progress, identify areas for improvement, and capture impact.
Fundraising and bid development	Securing resources through tenders, and funding applications.
Resource management	Organising time, budgets, and assets to achieve objectives.

Leadership	
Strategic thinking and oversight	Seeing the wider system, setting priorities, and anticipating risks and opportunities. Making grounded decisions that balance evidence, intuition, and experience, recognising that not all choices can be fully informed.
Supporting and enabling others	Empowering colleagues, partners, and communities to thrive and take ownership. Building collective power through shared learning, reflection, and dialogue.
Building relationships and partnerships	Cultivating trust and collaboration across boundaries and sectors. Fostering relationships and partnerships.
Facilitating alignment	Helping people find common ground and shared direction. Creating an environment where people regardless of their differences feel respected and valued.
Negotiation and Mediation	Facilitating dialogue, resolving differences, and finding mutually beneficial outcomes in situations of conflict or competing priorities.
Responding to feedback and insight	Using evidence, evaluation, and lived experience to learn, adapt, and improve. Inviting feedback and turning reflection into action.
Advocacy and influencing	Shaping agendas, persuading decision-makers, and championing public or organisational value. Inspires and motivates others.
Embedding user, audience and public engagement	Ensuring that user, audience, and public perspectives are integral to policies, programmes, and strategies.
Sensing and mapping	Understanding different drivers, and values that people and organisations bring to work. Identifying connections, assets, resources, and leverage points within a system.
Strategic communication	Framing narratives and stories to inspire, connect, and mobilise people around shared goals.

Attributes	
Empathetic	Able to put yourself in someone else's shoes, paying attention to their feelings and perspectives, and responding in ways that help people feel heard and understood.
Inclusive	Making space for different voices and experiences, not only inviting them in but ensuring they are valued and have influence in shaping outcomes. You work to flatten unnecessary hierarchies and create spaces where everyone's contribution carries weight.
Reflective	Taking time to pause, notice, and learn from what has happened, using both successes and mistakes as an opportunity for growth.
Curious	Asking questions and staying open to ideas and perspectives that challenge your own, always looking for what you don't yet know.
Resilient	Staying steady in the face of pressure or setbacks, adapting to change while holding on to your values and purpose.
Authentic	Showing up as yourself, with honesty and integrity, so that people know where they stand with you.
Relational	Building genuine connections grounded in trust, empathy, and respect. Paying attention to how people feel and what they need, creating a sense of safety and belonging in your interactions.
Collaborative	Working with others in ways that draw on diverse strengths and perspectives. Sharing ownership, co-creating solutions, and recognising that the best outcomes are achieved together rather than alone.
Kind	Choosing to act with generosity and compassion, recognising that how you treat people matters as much as what you achieve.
Constructive	Willing to ask difficult questions and hold up a mirror, encouraging others to think differently while staying constructive.
Present	Paying full attention to the moment and the people in front of you, bringing focus and awareness even in busy or difficult times.
Dependable	Following through on commitments and showing up consistently, even when circumstances change. Others can rely on you to be steady, accountable, and true to your word, creating a sense of trust and stability in the work.
Determined	Holding steady and seeing things through even when it is challenging. When obstacles arise, you adapt without losing sight of what matters.
Vulnerable	Being open about not having all the answers, and willing to share uncertainty, so that others feel safe to do the same.

Accountable	Taking responsibility for your actions and their impact and being willing to own mistakes as well as successes.
Trusting	Offering confidence in others' intentions and abilities, creating space for them to step forward and take responsibility.
Pragmatic	Balancing vision with practicality. Able to translate ideas into workable actions, adapt plans to real-world constraints, and focus on what will make the most meaningful difference right now.
Grounded	Grounded in what is possible and sustainable. Keeps ambitions anchored in evidence and context, finding progress through small, achievable steps rather than idealised plans.
Autonomous	Able to take initiative and make decisions with confidence and integrity. You trust your judgement, act responsibly without needing constant direction, and create space for others to do the same.
Flexibility	Willing to adapt when circumstances change, adjusting your approach while staying true to your values and goals. Able to understand and work with different value systems.
Open-minded	Willing to engage with ideas, perspectives, and experiences that challenge your own. You stay receptive to learning from difference, seeing it as a source of growth.
Compassionate	Sensitive to the experience of others and moved to act with care towards them. You balance understanding with a willingness to help, ensuring people feel supported.
Respectful	You treat others with dignity, even when you disagree. You recognise the inherent worth of every person and ensure your words and actions reflect that.
Team player	Works constructively and cooperatively with others. You communicate well, take on roles and responsibilities and contribute to a supportive, collaborative environment.
Self-aware	Aware of your own motivations, patterns, and impact on others. You use that awareness to grow, communicate authentically, and build more balanced relationships.
Equitable	Committed to fairness and justice. You notice and challenge inequities, ensuring that opportunities and recognition are shared openly and responsibly.
Encouraging	Values and celebrates the unique strengths, skills, and perspectives that others bring. You recognise contributions and create space for everyone to add value.
Perceptive	Able to read situations and perspectives thoughtfully, noticing what is said and unsaid. You use that understanding for the good of the community, to navigate complexity, and to build shared understanding.

Practices	
Seeing things through	Following commitments to completion and maintaining consistency over time.
Active listening	Paying full attention to others, seeking to understand before responding.
Meeting people where they are	Adapting approaches to different needs, contexts, and starting points.
Facilitating learning	Creating environments where people can encounter, learn from, and connect with each other.
Storytelling and sense-making	Encouraging people to share experiences and generate shared understanding.
Seeking and connecting	Identifying and linking people, resources, and opportunities across boundaries.
Building alliances and common ground	Bringing diverse groups together around shared goals and interests.
Taking ownership	Taking responsibility for seeing something through for someone else. Owning mistakes and making amends when things go wrong.
Offering constructive challenge	Questioning assumptions and providing feedback that helps others grow.
Practising kindness	Demonstrating compassion and generosity in everyday interactions.
Showing vulnerability	Being open about limitations and uncertainties to build deeper trust.
Addressing power dynamics	Making visible and constructively engaging with the influence of roles, structures, and privilege.
Celebrating progress	Acknowledging achievements, however small, to sustain motivation and morale.
Giving appreciations	Expressing gratitude and recognising others' contributions.
Calibrating time	Accepting that people work at different paces, and that sometimes you need to give things time, and other times you need to encourage things to move along.

Blind spots	
Oversimplification	Reducing complex issues into neat explanations that miss nuance, overlook contradictions, or silence voices that don't fit the tidy story.
Overcomplication	Making processes or language unnecessarily complex, failing to trust others to take responsibility.
Connections without purpose	Building networks or partnerships that don't have a clear direction or value for those involved.
Burnout and exhaustion	Investing so much energy that sustainability is lost, leading to fatigue, disengagement, or undermining the quality of the work.
Power hoarding and gatekeeping	Holding onto contacts, knowledge, influence, or resources instead of enabling others to step up, share responsibility, and lead.
Overpromising	Agreeing to deliver more than capacity allows, failing to manage expectation in preference for pleasing others.
Misaligned assumptions	Believing that what the partner needs are automatically aligned with what the university or institution wants, without testing or checking.
Agenda imbalance	Letting one set of interests or priorities dominate rather than maintaining a balance between different voices and perspectives.
Deficit framing	Looking only at what communities lack, instead of recognising their strengths, assets, and the knowledge they already bring.
Tokenistic inclusion	Treating inclusion as a box-ticking exercise rather than embedding it meaningfully in design, decision-making, and outcomes.
Self-awareness	Losing sight of how your own behaviours, emotions, or assumptions shape interactions and decisions. Failing to recognise that even good intentions can unintentionally create tension, confusion, or imbalance in relationships and outcomes
Impatience	Failing to realise how long it takes to develop authentic relationships and trust.

Purposes	
Reducing barriers	Working to remove structural, cultural, and practical obstacles so that more people can participate fully and fairly.
Improving interventions	Strengthening programmes, services, and initiatives to make sure they deliver the outcomes that people actually need.
Measuring and articulating value	Gathering evidence of what's working and communicating it in ways that help others see and understand the impact.
Facilitating impact	Creating the conditions where knowledge, partnerships, and resources can combine to generate impact and social outcomes.
Building trust	Developing relationships that are consistent and reliable, so that people feel confident in the process and in each other.
Supporting culture change	Helping organisations and systems shift their values, behaviours, and norms towards more open, collaborative, and inclusive ways of working.
Amplifying underrepresented voices	Ensuring that marginalised perspectives are not only heard but are taken seriously and shape decisions.
Facilitating quality	Embedding high standards of practice, reflection, and continuous improvement.
Inclusion	Designing environments where difference is respected, diversity is celebrated, and everyone feels they belong.
Disrupting assumptions	Questioning rigid traditions, unexamined assumptions, or “the way things have always been done” when they get in the way of fairness or progress.
Grand challenges	Engaging with complex, systemic challenges that have no easy solutions, bringing people together to experiment and adapt.
Enabling potential	Expanding opportunities for people to exercise choice, agency, and self-determination in their lives.



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