

Insight

With thanks to Anonymous Director of a Non-Profit

Streamlining university support for small organisations and charities

“ *Make sure there is just one point of contact!* ”

I run a small non-profit organisation, it is just me and two other volunteers. I run pop-up events all over the local area for families. I knew that my local university offered spaces for groups like me to use for free and I was keen to try this out. I was so happy to hear that the local university was doing this as they have some really specialist spaces plus all their buildings are accessible which supports me for my events as this can be a big problem when setting up my activities.

Sadly, in reality, I was overwhelmed with how many barriers were presented to me using the university space. I had to chase so many people and no one seemed to take responsibility for my activity. I had a much better experience with a local museum who seemed to understand how much work I needed to undertake to hold an event.

I've been learning about what real partnership means, by reading the NCI's Equitable Partnerships for Civic Engagement. One element that stood out is the need for flexibility in university processes. The toolkit highlights how civic organisations are not all the same and do not have the same expectations or resources. It recommends that universities develop processes that are flexible enough to be adapted to different projects and relationships, including streamlining contact points for small organisations, and making internal improvements (like reducing paperwork or automating processes) so that collaboration is possible rather than burdensome.

If I could give advice to a university staff member trying to open up their rooms for someone like me, I would say: Make sure there is just one point of contact, I think had over four people contacting me about different parts of my event. Understand that small organisations have a lot

of paperwork, try not to add to this! Is there anything that can be done internally or automated which will help so that someone wouldn't have to do all the leg work!