

New Pilot Initiative: The Collaboration Lab

NCACE are pleased to announce a new pilot initiative, The Collaboration Lab. This will be a co-designed initiative aimed at supporting existing university / arts and cultural sector partnerships to find sustainable ways to continue their valuable and impactful work beyond project funding terms, and in the face of growing challenges and pressures on traditional sources of funding for collaborations of this nature. The programme will consist of a mix of face to face and online sessions working with a cohort of similar collaborative projects to help them identify aspects of their work which could become sustainable through a variety of routes, for example income generation, extended partnerships or collaborations, new sources of funding or other investment. Partnerships will identify their key goals in this respect and help co-develop a highly tailored programme of support towards these goals. In addition to access to expert support, additional training, resources and advice, it is our intention that the cohort will become a valuable source of peer-to-peer support as participants work towards their sustainability goals. Equity between university and arts and cultural organisations will be at the heart of the process, as will thinking about sustainability in ways that are authentic and practicable for collaborations of this nature.

As an introduction to the process, NCACE is hosting [Cultures of Change: Arts and Humanities as a Space of Invention](#), a discussion on 10 December 2025 at 2pm focused on what sustainability and entrepreneurship look like in the context of arts and humanities research collaborations with the arts and cultural sector. This will be a hybrid event highlighting the ingenuity, innovation and creative methods of sustainability often found in partnerships of this nature, and reflecting on how this existing practice could be more clearly articulated in narratives around “commercialisation and dynamism”. Further details will be announced shortly, but please save the date [here](#). If you would like to contribute to the event by presenting a short case study on your research collaboration, knowledge exchange or engagement work, please email Suzie.Leighton@sas.ac.uk for further discussion.

The Collaboration Lab pilot will launch on **21 January 2026** with an Ideas Pool event designed to help collaborations identify the key aspects of their work they believe has the potential to become sustainable, and to reflect on their aims and how they would like to work together to achieve them. Although attending the Ideas Pool will not commit participants to the Collaboration Lab itself, attendees from this event will be

invited to form the initial peer-to-peer cohort. The event will also mark the beginning of co-designing the Lab pathways and developing the peer-to-peer network.

The pilot is designed for university and arts and cultural sector partners who have already or are currently working in partnership, to participate in together. We will endeavour to make the launch event hybrid, but please note that partners need to be together in one location to participate, even if they join remotely. Please register your interest here by filling in this [brief form](#), and we will be in touch with further information.