

Bradford 2025 and LEEDS 2023

Shared Cultural Futures: Knowledge Transfer Exchange

Evaluation report

August 2024



Photo by Robling Photography

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Forward

We hope this report and the recommendations included will prove useful for those invested in the future of major cultural events and the impact they can have on our cities and residents. Whilst the primary focus is on the shared learning between LEEDS 2023 and Bradford UK City of Culture 2025, the learnings and outcomes are informed by a myriad of national and international case studies, expertise and legacy outcomes from many programmed that have come before – of which Leeds and Bradford are now the latest editions to the family.

Whilst the closeness of the cities both in terms of timing and geography represented a unique opportunity for knowledge transfer, the outcomes of this report and the journey undertaken to collaborate with one another are relevant to a broad range of cultural initiatives and temporary programmes.

What is clear is much more could be done to solidify learnings and capacity building in this field, to secure the future of major cultural projects in the UK and understand where current processes and approaches need to adapt. 34 years on from Glasgow's title as European Capital of Culture, we need more opportunities to reflect on our insights, identify necessary changes, and evaluate the collective legacy of such iconic cultural moments on a local, national and international scale.

Opportunities to come together as a major events sector and discuss weaknesses as well as successes are few and far between. The way in which we measure and compare our outcomes remains an imperfect science, alongside ongoing challenges with how we capture and communicate our impact. If those organising and delivering these events are facing similar challenges year on year, what are the ways in which we can collaborate to address these and embed a stronger culture of knowledge sharing and capacity building for the next generation of major cultural programmes?

The energy and enthusiasm of the people working to deliver these unique cultural interventions cannot be captured succinctly in an evaluation report, however it is exactly this human resource that will ensure the future of major events in the UK is nurtured with exemplary commitment and expertise.

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Contents

Bradford 2025 and LEEDS 2023	0
Forward	1
Contents	2
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	9
About Shared Cultural Futures	9
Evaluation approach	9
1. Project Overview	10
Activities	10
Events	13
Outputs.....	14
Engagement and reach.....	14
2. Effectiveness of knowledge exchange activities	16
The unique context of Bradford and Leeds’s years of culture	16
Overall successes	17
Funding gave the project structure and purpose	17
Generosity and openness of the Leeds team	18
Development and relationships with funders	19
Volunteering.....	19
Operations	20
Producing and Artist Development	21
Facilitating international partnerships	21
Staff moving between Cities of Culture: organic knowledge transfer	22
SAIL: having a sustainability partner working across Cities of Culture.....	22
Ongoing commitment to knowledge exchange	23
Challenges	24
Timing and capacity	24
Matching roles and experience	25
Systems	26

Planning and communication	27
3. Learning and implementation	27
Understand points of difference.....	27
Value of informal conversations for knowledge exchange.....	29
Embed a reflective culture.....	29
Staff wellbeing and delivering at pace	30
Knowledge exchange as iterative and imperfect	31
4. Enhancing knowledge exchange through participatory events.....	32
Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?	33
Access and major events	38
<i>Are we measuring the right things?:</i> Evaluation session	39
SAIL: Creating Sustainable Events.....	40
Cultural Education Conference.....	42
5. Legacy and recommendations	44
1. Embed knowledge exchange from the beginning	44
2. Having a dedicated knowledge exchange role at Cities of Culture.....	45
3. A toolkit or start up pack for major events	45
4. A formal expectation of knowledge exchange from funders.....	45
5. Sharing relationships with local authorities and local funders.....	46
6. Sharing relevant evaluation and benchmarking data.....	47
7. Streamlining systems and processes.....	47
9. A fellowship or network of major event experts	48
10. Is making mistakes part of the journey?.....	49
Appendices.....	50
i. Evaluation Logic Model	0
ii Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? Event Survey.....	0
iii. List of files shared between teams	5

Executive Summary

Overview

- Shared Cultural Futures engaged approximately **46 members of staff from LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025 in knowledge sharing activities. A further 700 people engaged with the project through participatory events** in Bradford and Leeds.
- Knowledge exchange occurred **through a broad range of activities** including meetings between equivalent roles, informal conversations, email exchanges, training sessions, shadowing activities, and the sharing of templates and resources.
- The **geographic proximity of Leeds and Bradford, and the fact that their years of culture were delivered closely together, helped to facilitate knowledge exchange**, and gave the project a sense of immediacy. Proximity enabled face-to-face meeting to take place, which helped to build trust and relationships.
- The project **generated a number of digital outputs**, including recordings of knowledge sharing events and discussions, which will be available online shortly.

Key successes

- A **combination of informal and structured activities was effective** in supporting different types of knowledge exchange. Informal interactions helped staff to build relationships and provided a safe environment for honest reflection. Pre-planned activities allowed staff to dedicate more time to the project and work within a clear framework.
- The **generosity and openness of the LEEDS 2023 team had a very positive impact on knowledge exchange**. This included Leeds sharing their time and resources and being honest about challenges and successes. Sharing learning from recent events was useful for the Bradford team and some members of the Leeds team felt it had been ‘validating’ to reflect on what they had achieved.
- **Volunteering was a key area for knowledge exchange, with a number of activities and meetings taking place between the Bradford and Leeds teams**, as well as the sharing of resources and platforms. The Bradford team had several opportunities to meet Leeds volunteers; this was extremely useful as they developed their own systems and approaches.
- The **Leeds Development team shared a lot of helpful learning about their experience with different funders and this offered a useful benchmark for Bradford** in terms of nurturing their own relationships with local funders.
- The **sharing and facilitating of international partnerships** emerged as a significant outcome from Shared Cultural Futures. The Bradford team felt that Leeds had been particularly generous in linking them into international conversations, and that **new international collaborations had been forged as a ‘direct legacy’ of this exchange**.

- Several members of the LEEDS 2023 team have been recruited into new roles at Bradford, and this emerged as an organic form of knowledge transfer. Members of the Leeds team felt that the project had **facilitated talent sharing between the organisations, and supported staff members as they went on to work with Bradford 2025.**
- SAIL's partnerships with Leeds and Bradford offered another example **of how knowledge transfer can be sustained when a delivery partner moves between Cities/Years of Culture.** SAIL's engagement with knowledge transfer was supported by their organisational aim to exchange knowledge around sustainability, and to create networks where this can take place.
- A key theme that emerged from evaluation was the **level of engagement and commitment to knowledge exchange as an ongoing process.** This was evident in the level of staff participation in knowledge exchange activities and evaluation conversations.

Challenges

- The **differences in the lifecycles of the two organisations presented some challenges for knowledge exchange as both teams were extremely busy** setting up and winding down their organisations respectively.
- Knowledge exchange was **easier to implement between those with equivalent departments and roles and differences in organisational structures sometimes meant that there wasn't an obvious parallel.** This sometimes made it difficult to find a shared point of reference.
- While communication between teams was overwhelmingly positive, there was **scope for clarifying to all staff expectations and goals around the programme** and streamlining project communications.

Learning and Implementation

- A key learning from Shared Cultural Futures was **how knowledge exchange between Cities of Culture must be understood in the context of their differences.** Whilst geographic proximity and existing relationships were instrumental in facilitating knowledge exchange, it was acknowledged that LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025 are different organisations, with different structures and needs.
- Some Bradford staff felt that the most valuable thing from the project **was using what Leeds had done as a 'trigger to think about how we're doing what we are doing'.** It provided an opportunity to *'carefully and intentionally... draw out the useful learning'*, and to build confidence in their own approach.

- The **opportunity to reflect as part of the project evaluation was valued by both teams.** Staff emphasised that there had been little time to reflect within their tight delivery timeframes but felt it was important to make time for this so that learning can be embedded in an ongoing fashion.
- **Staff wellbeing emerged as an important theme, in an environment where the pace and pressure of delivery can create a risk of burnout.** Creating a supportive and reflective culture where staff feel safe to share emerged as a priority as well as acknowledging that knowledge sharing can ask a lot from teams ‘when they are at their tiredest’.
- Participants were keen to emphasise that **everyone was on a learning journey and that the process of exchanging knowledge is iterative and imperfect.** Understanding this felt like an important aspect of the learning, as well as recognising the challenges of reflecting while delivering at pace.

Learning from participatory events

- Participatory events were **an effective way of sharing knowledge more widely across the public, cultural and local authority sectors.** Staff felt these events were crucial in ensuring that the learning captured doesn’t disappear at the end of each Year of Culture.
- The **intention of knowledge exchange helped to give participatory events a clear focus. There was strong buy-in from staff and organisers,** with the understanding that this knowledge could help future Cities of Culture and large-scale cultural events.
- The *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?* conference framed Cities of Culture as a ‘family’ which should be supportive rather than competitive, sharing learning and resources. **Presenters were candid about what had worked and what hadn’t, and there was a sense that the ‘failures’ and mistakes were an important part of the journey.**
- Delegates **valued the opportunity to hear from a range of perspectives, and the honesty from presenters about what hadn’t worked well.** One delegate described the conference as ‘real knowledge exchange in practice’.
- When asked how major events can best share knowledge and learning, responses included **continuing to offer face to face events, providing case studies of successes and lessons learned, building in shared learning mechanisms from the outset and finding creative and succinct ways to disseminate findings.**

Recommendations

A challenge that emerged from the project is how knowledge can continue to be passed down between Cities of Culture and be held in a place and format that people can access. With this in mind, we have created **10 recommendations for future Cities/Years of Culture which draw on key learnings from Shared Cultural Futures.**

1. Embed knowledge exchange from the beginning

Embedding knowledge exchange at the early stages of an organisation and starting activities early can maximise opportunities for knowledge transfer and enable organisations to schedule activities at a time where they have capacity. Having a joint kick off moment and building a formal moment into the handover process may help to set expectations and embed a culture of sharing from the start.

2. Have a dedicated knowledge exchange role at Cities of Culture

Having a dedicated knowledge exchange officer could help to ensure that the process is 'led' and alleviate some of the pressure of planning and capturing knowledge transfer, as well as thinking from the outset about how learning can be shared with future Cities of Culture.

3. A toolkit or start up pack for major events

Participants recommended that a toolkit or asset bank be designed for Cities of Culture or other major events, to be used at set-up stage. This could include draft role descriptions, templates, options analyses, and key policy and process documents, so that they don't have to create everything from scratch. The emphasis on the toolkit should be supportive rather than prescriptive so as not to stifle innovation. There was a sense that for Cities of Culture this should be a DCMS-funded, centralised resource that could be updated as needed.

4. A formal expectation of knowledge exchange from funders

Shared Cultural Futures participants reflected that a more active, structured approach from funders around knowledge exchange would be valuable - alongside a toolkit - so that expectations are built in more formally from the outset. Suggestions included DCMS facilitating an official roundtable between the handing over and new City of Culture which forms *'part of the relationship with any designated winning city of culture'*.

5. Sharing relationships with local authorities and local funders

Participants felt it would be valuable to explore ways of cultivating funder circles at regional levels, particularly in relation to philanthropy and individual giving. One suggestion was to host an annual conference for arts philanthropy in the North of England. Participants also felt that it would be useful for Cities of Culture to engage in specific knowledge sharing activities around building and maintaining relationships with the local authority sector.

6. Sharing relevant evaluation and benchmarking data

Sharing evaluation and benchmarking data, even if it is provisional, may help Cities of Culture to develop their own benchmarks, and to have more consistency in the development of KPIs. The LEEDS 2023 data dashboard was a helpful starting point for Bradford as they started to develop their evaluation and monitoring approach.

7. Streamlining systems and processes

Streamlining systems and processes can make the knowledge exchange process more efficient and effective. This includes informing staff earlier that the knowledge exchange will take place so that they know to keep documents, records, and logs, and having a defined structure in place early, so that staff feel comfortable about passing on information. Collating key policy and process documents and sharing a 'who's who' and FAQs ahead of more formal knowledge exchange activities could support this process.

8. Sharing learning across the organisation as well as across teams

There is an opportunity for knowledge exchange to be more cross cutting so that learning is shared across the organisation instead of being 'trapped' within teams. Suggestions for this include bringing together all heads of departments in one room from the outgoing and new City of Culture. Ideally this should occur in person, so that staff can meet everyone and identify points of learning and connection across teams.

9. A fellowship or network of major events experts

It was acknowledged that knowledge transfer between Cities of Culture is often based on goodwill and there is a large pool of untapped knowledge which could be drawn upon by having a live network or fellowship of people with relevant experience. There were different suggestions for how this could work. A group of freelance consultants that move between Cities of Culture and help to build infrastructure and operations was one approach, with the caveat that each City of Culture was unique, and it is important that *'identikit models are not produced'*.

Another suggestion was a fellowship or network of people made up of different levels/roles, whereby people apply to be part of a directory and are willing to be contacted. This could take the form of group/mentoring scheme where people can access support and draw on people's experiences at different stages, such as bidding, set up, delivery and wind down, so that there is a continuous handing down process.

10. Is making mistakes part of the journey?

When reflecting on whether there is an 'ideal or better model for knowledge transfer', an interesting question that emerged is the extent to which Cities of Culture need to make their own mistakes as part of their individual journey. While there is a clear call for not reinventing the wheel, some participants talked about the value of pulling something apart and rebuilding it as part of the learning process. There is a balance to be struck in sharing valuable tools, resources and structures which can alleviate some of the pressures around operational set up, drawing out the things that are 'core' or consistent to any City of Culture, while also understanding the local context and unique moment in which it is taking place.

Introduction

About Shared Cultural Futures

This report evaluates Shared Cultural Futures, a knowledge transfer and exchange project funded by Spirit of 2012 that took place between October 2023 and March 2024. It was co-delivered by LEEDS 2023 Year of Culture and Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture, with the aim of promoting knowledge transfer between the two organisations, and more widely across the arts, cultural, and local authority sectors.

The project emerged in response to the challenges faced by major events as temporary interventions in sharing learning and making improvements. A programme of activities and events was developed to facilitate knowledge sharing between teams, and **to understand which approaches were effective in supporting knowledge transfer**. Through shadowing activities, collaboratively produced events, training sessions, informal discussions and the sharing of resources, the project sought to understand whether there is **an ideal/better model for knowledge transfer between short term organisations**.

Evaluation approach

Dr Nicky Hatton, a freelance evaluation consultant was commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of Shared Cultural Futures. An evaluation framework was designed in collaboration with the Bradford 2025 team, and a logic model approach used to understand the changes they hoped to see, the needs of evaluation participants, and the best opportunities for data collection (see [appendix](#)). This was utilised, alongside intended programme outcomes, to create an outcomes framework.

Evaluation sought to understand how the project delivered against its intended outcomes and was shaped by the following questions:

- To what extent did the project achieve its goals of fostering knowledge sharing, collaboration, and learning across LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025, and what factors influenced the success or failure of knowledge sharing activities?
- How effectively has the LEEDS 2023/Bradford 2025 Knowledge Exchange Transfer:

- captured effective knowledge transfer between Leeds & Bradford?
- facilitated shared learning across participatory events?
- enhanced knowledge exchange using participatory events?

Methodology

A mixed methods approach was used, combining qualitative methods with quantitative data-gathering (an events survey and monitoring form). Quantitative data enabled us to capture engagement and reach at participatory events, as well as participant experience. Qualitative methods gave insight into the 'how and the why' of Bradford and Leeds's experiences by gathering in-depth feedback from staff and capturing examples which best illustrated learning and change.

This report draws on the following inputs:

- E-survey data collected from event participants.
- Semi-structured interviews and focus groups with staff from Bradford 2025 and LEEDS 2023.
- Observations of participatory events.
- Data from a collaborative knowledge exchange tracker document which was used to capture activities and interactions.

1. Project Overview

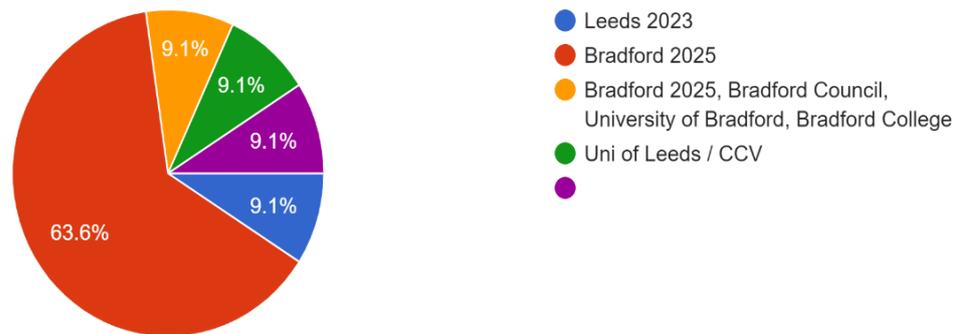
Activities

Knowledge Transfer and Exchange activities took place between October 2023 and March 2024.

- Approximately 73% of conversations logged in the tracker document took place between Bradford 2025 and LEEDS 2023, with a further 27% of interactions taking place with local authorities and the higher education sector.

organisation of the person or people you were communicating with

11 responses

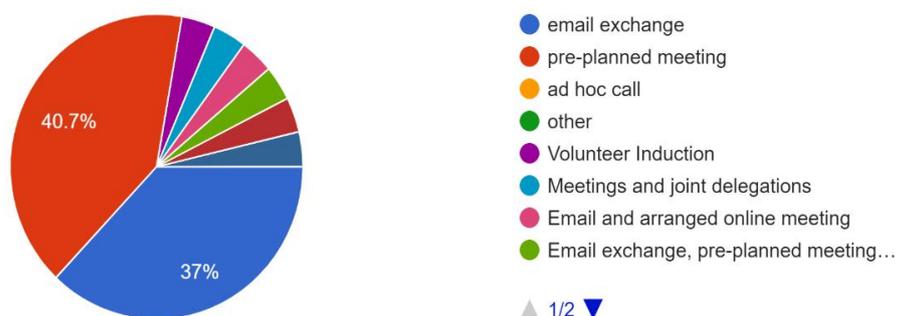


How did knowledge exchange conversations take place?

- Approximately 40% of interactions that were logged took place as part of pre-planned meeting.
- 37% of interactions took place over email.
- A further 22% of interactions took place in other ways such as at volunteer inductions, through ad hoc phone calls, joint delegations and through other means.

mode of communication (please pick all that apply)

27 responses



Evaluation conversations with both teams gave insight into the nature of knowledge exchange activities, which varied across the duration of the project. These included a range of planned and structured activities alongside many informal and spontaneous meetings.

Activities by teams:

- **Senior Leadership:** Some early meetings about systems, procedures and structures took place before the Shared Cultural Futures project had officially started. The LEEDS 2023 Director of Programmes undertook some consultancy on specific areas, such as project management and staffing.
- **Digital:** Informal conversations took place around team structures, software, and points of difference. A digital resource on *Reframing Digital for Cultural Organisations* was developed collaboratively in March 2024 between the Leeds and Bradford teams.
- **Procurement:** A training session on contract signing software, run by LEEDS 2023, took place early on in the project.
- **Development:** Several meetings took place and emails were exchanged between equivalent roles and teams. The development team at Bradford received lots of advice from colleagues in Leeds; knowledge exchange took place through a combination of formal sessions, informal conversations, and the shared delivery of community fundraising sessions.
- **Volunteering:** A broad range of knowledge sharing activities took place, including meetings between volunteer programme leads, and the Bradford volunteer team attending Leeds volunteer events such as interviews and inductions. There was an informal Q&A session with the LEEDS 2023 team during a team visit to Bradford and approximately 200 Leeds volunteers have transferred over to the Bradford team.
- **Producing:** A producer round table event took place in Leeds facilitated by producers from LEEDS 2023. A placement opportunity was created for 2 assistant producers at Bradford to shadow Leeds on the delivery of a major event at the end of 2023.
- **Evaluation:** 4 in depth interviews and 3 reflective focus groups took place with the Bradford 2025 team, which were attended by approximately 24 members of staff. A further 15 one-to-one interviews took place with members of the LEEDS 2023 team.

Staff also told us about:

- Informal exchanges over coffee and impromptu meetings at events. The relaxed nature of these meetings emerged as particularly conducive to knowledge exchange, with the

informal context providing a safe environment for honest reflection (see [Learning and Implementation](#) section of this report).

- Email exchanges to clarify points of information.
- The sharing of electronic resources across departments, including budgeting and financial planning information, proposal and contract templates, funding bids, induction packs, HR policies, line manager resources, supplier information, a project management slide deck, role descriptions and personal development plans. A list of files shared can be found in the [appendix](#) of this report.
- Attending events and performances together, e.g. the Leeds Digital Festival.
- The organic knowledge exchange that had started to occur through the recruitment of approximately 10 former LEEDS 2023 staff and freelancers to the Bradford 2025 team.

Events

There were several events planned during the project, aimed at sharing knowledge beyond the core teams with wider professional networks. Responding to the dynamic nature of the organisations, staffing and resources, those 'events' evolved into various forms. They included:

- **A Cultural Education conference**, delivered in partnership with Leeds 33 (formally Leeds Cultural Education Partnership).
- An event on **Student Opportunities in the Creative Industries**, aimed to facilitate knowledge exchange and networking across the cultural and education sectors in Leeds and Bradford. This included insights and tips from LEEDS 2023 on how they had engaged with students across the year and was attended by staff from Leeds City Council, Bradford Council, Grand Futures Leeds, Bradford 2025, Higher and Further Education institutions in Leeds and Bradford, and several Leeds based creative and cultural organisations.
- An event on **Creating Sustainable Events**, hosted by Leeds and Bradford's sustainability partner SAIL.
- **Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?**, a conference on the legacy of time-limited major events which took place at the University of Bradford in March 2024.

- A **delegation of international visitors** from interested organisations in the days before the *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?* conference. Delegates were hosted in Bradford one day then Leeds the next, mixing with core team members and each other while visiting sites of cultural interest in both cities; enabling the organisations to build on their existing global networks.
- A workshop series on fundraising, developing and delivering community projects, delivered by Community Action Bradford and District and Give Bradford.
- Both organisation's teams collaborated with Leeds Community Foundation on a Youth Voice Event at the Everyman Cinema in Leeds, sharing experiences of empowering youth voices. The partnership enabled LEEDS 2023 to invest in a toolkit that is available for practitioners.

Outcomes and learnings from these events can be found in the [events](#) section of this report.

Outputs

The project generated the following outputs, which will be available online shortly:

- As LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025 are taking quite different approaches to their digital teams and methods, a series of short panel discussions were held named Experience Design: reframing digital for arts organisations. These discussions were designed for small organisations to understand how digital sector practice and human centred design can help organisations work in radically new ways.
- A film recording of the Creating Sustainable Events presentations and Q&A discussions, hosted by SAIL.
- Recordings of keynote presentations and panel discussions from *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?*.

Engagement and reach

Shared Cultural Futures engaged:

- Approximately **46** staff members across LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025¹ in knowledge sharing activities.
- Approximately **700** people through participatory events, including:
 - **156** delegates at the Cultural Education Conference.
 - **118** people attending free workshops on fundraising, developing and delivering community projects, delivered with Community Action Bradford and District and Give Bradford
 - **45** people at the Student Opportunities event, with a further **95** receiving follow up information.
 - Over **100** people at the Youth Voice event at the Everyman Cinema.
 - **78** people at SAIL's Creating Sustainable Events session, including **12** team members from Bradford 2025.
 - **108** attendees at *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?*, the conference on major events and why we do them.

¹ Due to the informal nature of some knowledge exchange activities and the fact that some of the Leeds staff had left before the evaluation began, this number is likely to be higher.

2. Effectiveness of knowledge exchange activities

The unique context of Bradford and Leeds's years of culture

'Geography and time have been on our side'.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

Evaluation conversations with both teams emphasised the unique context in which Shared Cultural Futures has taken place. The geographic proximity of Leeds and Bradford and the fact that their years of culture were delivered so closely together has been a key factor which has supported and facilitated knowledge sharing.

- Staff felt that geographic proximity enabled knowledge exchange to occur more organically than it could do with other Cities of Culture. This included lots of face-to-face meetings, which were important for building trust and relationships.
- The Engagement team at Bradford reflected that having a 12-month crossover period with their equivalent roles was extremely useful but only possible because of the timings of the organisations and the fact that their roles were some of the first to be recruited at Bradford.
- One member of the Bradford 2025 team felt that the timings of the organisations had helped to give the project a sense of immediacy: *'...its current and relevant information... 'it's right here, right now'.*
- Proximity also facilitated the sharing of local partnerships in West Yorkshire, including the development of some *'positive building blocks'* for new relationships with funders.
- A further advantage was that Hull was City of Culture in 2017. This meant that the Bradford team were able to draw on wider talent and relevant experience from people who had worked at Hull and Leeds. It is notable that approximately 20% of the current Bradford team have either worked at Leeds or Hull and 92% of Bradford's team are based in Yorkshire.
- It was acknowledged that the timings of the organisations also created some [challenges](#) for knowledge exchange, due to the fact that they were at very different points in their life cycles.

Overall successes

'It's been very interesting for Leeds to do a 'warts and all' reflection on our year and to talk about what we could have done differently in a safe way'.

(LEEDS 2023 team member)

'I would like to have had this from a previous year of culture'.

(LEEDS 2023 team member)

Evaluation conversations identified some critical success factors for knowledge exchange between Cities of Culture and some key examples of what had worked well for Bradford and Leeds.

Funding gave the project structure and purpose

'The funding [from Spirit of 2012] helped to give knowledge exchange a sense of purpose and urgency' (Bradford 2025 team member).

While some knowledge exchange was already occurring informally before the project started, having a project that was formally funded by Spirit of 2012 was crucial in giving activities a clear structure and a sense of purpose. It enabled Leeds staff to dedicate more time to the project and work within a clear framework:

'Having a structured work plan and being held to account has been really useful' (LEEDS 2023 team member).

- One member of the Bradford 2025 team reflected that although they already had quite a close relationship with their LEEDS 2023 counterpart, it was useful to have this formalised as this set *'an intention and a culture of active learning'*.
- Some staff reflected that this culture of *'we're here to learn'* meant that they could talk more openly about their experiences and felt safe to share things that hadn't worked as well.
- One member of the Bradford team said that before the project was in place, they felt that they had to keep *'going to Leeds to ask for things'*. This was challenging because

they were in full delivery mode and had limited capacity. Having a structured project helped with this as it allowed them to build in dedicated time for knowledge exchange:

'I could be more explicit about what I needed and I also knew more about what I needed... [I was] not having to ask them to do us a favour when they're busy' (Bradford 2025 team member).

Generosity and openness of the Leeds team

'The producer sharing session was particularly useful and that was part of the formal project... they were really generous'.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

A recurring theme in evaluation conversations with the Bradford team was the generosity and openness of the Leeds team and the positive impact that this had on knowledge exchange. This included Leeds sharing their time and resources but also being honest about things that hadn't worked well.

- One member of the Bradford team explained it had been especially useful to hear about the challenges their equivalent role had faced and things that they might have introduced sooner. This included *'things that seemed small but had a massive impact on day to day working life'*.
- The generosity of the Leeds team reminded the Bradford team of their ongoing commitment to being a 'learning organisation' and that included a preparedness to share learning themselves along the way.
- Concurrently, the Leeds team identified many positive aspects of sharing their experiences. As a short-term organisation, it felt positive and satisfying to pass on systems and processes that could be useful to others after their organisation wound down.
- Passing on learning felt validating for some members of the Leeds team and offered an important moment to reflect on what they achieved. One member of the team described it as a 'cathartic' process to look back on their delivery year, in an environment where there hadn't been much time for reflection.

Development and relationships with funders

The development team at Bradford felt that Leeds had shared a lot of helpful learning about their experience with different funders which had *'helped to frame some of [their] own conversations with funders'*. Leeds's relationship with local funders also offered a useful benchmark for Bradford in terms of nurturing their own relationships in West Yorkshire. There was an instance in which knowledge sharing from Leeds led to Bradford securing an increase in funding from one local funder:

'We have been able to use information from LEEDS 2023 to influence a funder to give us more... but it has to be done in a sensitive manner'.

The team also felt they had learnt about Leeds's capacity and team structure, which they'd been able to apply in the recruitment of their own team.

Volunteering

'We've got a lot of really rich value out of thinking about how we configure volunteer roles, having access to the back end of their volunteer management platform... We've ended up selecting that platform ourselves... All of this has been incredibly useful'.

(Bradford volunteering team).



Photo: Spirit of 2012

Volunteering was a key area for knowledge transfer and exchange, with a number of activities and meetings taking place between the Bradford and Leeds teams, as well as the sharing of resources and platforms. The Bradford team had several opportunities to meet Leeds volunteers, which was extremely useful as they developed their own systems and approaches.

- Having access to live recruitment, training and induction events in real time was valuable in terms of guiding Bradford's own process with volunteering.
- Attending meet and greet sessions and volunteer interviews was also very useful, as well as the opportunity to ask key operational questions on topics like uniforms and security vetting, for which they received some *'good, nuanced advice'*.
- One member of the Bradford team felt that sharing volunteering approaches was *'a great opportunity to gain the knowledge and expertise of that team but also to share volunteers'*. Following Shared Cultural Futures, around 200 volunteers were signposted from the Leeds volunteer pool to volunteering opportunities with Bradford 2025, with 49 so far signing up as Bradford 2025 volunteers.
- As the LEEDS 2023 Head of Volunteers moved over from Hull City of Culture, this provided a valuable opportunity to draw on learning from both organisations. This staff member felt that the sharing of volunteer resources between Cities of Culture was very valuable, particularly the use of Rosterfy, the volunteer database.
- The Leeds team reflected that they would have liked volunteers to be more involved in directing and creating content for the knowledge exchange programme, and that more lead in time would have supported this process.

Operations

Leeds shared many templates with the operations team at Bradford which were useful at set-up stage. This was partly because Bradford didn't have to start from scratch when creating their own templates, but it also presented an opportunity to reflect on what Leeds were doing and whether/how this would work for Bradford. As a member of the Bradford team reflected:

'A lot of templates were tied into Leeds City Council and had quite formal language so it was interesting to see how that model would fit for us'.

Leeds also passed on some valuable learning around data protection and child protection policies, which helped Bradford to think about their overall approach and strategy for risk management. This was reassuring, and Bradford felt they were now well prepared to develop their own policies: *'We can design that into our processes so that it doesn't become an issue for us'*.

Producing and Artist Development

A knowledge exchange workshop delivered by the Leeds producing team received very good feedback. Attended by 2 members of Leeds team and 4 members of the Bradford team, it focused on specific aspects of producing within a City of Culture, such as managing relationships with artists. The Bradford team felt it had been helpful to reflect on challenges that were unique to Cities of Culture and that it was *'useful to have a space to talk openly about how difficult that is'*.

- A member of the Bradford 2025 team reflected that there had been some very useful knowledge sharing around artist aspirations, specifically in supporting artists to consider ambition in relation to growing and sustaining their practice, rather than just growing in scale.
- Though capacity on both sides was very tight, one of the assistant producers at Bradford was able to shadow the Leeds team on their delivery of an event, which they found very valuable. There was consensus that this process could have been strengthened by them coming on board sooner and for longer, and to have carefully chosen which event to shadow.

Facilitating international partnerships

'Leeds were incredibly generous in introducing us to the European City of Culture family... this massively helped us with trying to connect with our European partners and finding a relationship'.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

The sharing and facilitating of international partnerships emerged as a significant outcome from Shared Cultural Futures. A member of the Bradford 2025 team reflected that *'that part of knowledge share was amazing... they were generous, they were giving, they ensured that contacts were made'*. This was echoed by other members of the team who felt that Leeds had been particularly generous in linking Bradford into international conversations, which was *'an*

important shortcut in building these relationships. The team felt that new opportunities for collaboration within their international programme had been forged as a 'direct legacy' of this exchange.

Staff moving between Cities of Culture: organic knowledge transfer

'It's been very beneficial the knowledge they've brought over, and we've utilised it quite specifically in terms of presenting back to the team and making strategic decisions around software... based on the experience they've had doing similar work there. That's been the most useful aspect'.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

At the *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?* conference, West Yorkshire Mayor Tracy Brabin acknowledged the unique pathways between Cities of Culture and cultural celebrations in West Yorkshire and how it fosters opportunities for organic knowledge transfer, as well as sustaining careers in the region and sector. When this evaluation took place, several members of the LEEDS 2023 team had recently been recruited into new roles at Bradford 2025 and this emerged as an organic form of knowledge transfer between Leeds and Bradford. Members of the Leeds team felt that the project had facilitated talent sharing between the organisations, and supported staff members as they went on to interview for roles at Bradford 2025.

- A senior member of the Bradford team reflected that they currently manage two creative technologists who have moved over from Leeds, and they were starting to influence strategic decisions around Bradford's choice of software.
- Leeds staff who transferred over have been able to bring some external relationships with them, for example, working with Leeds and Bradford City Councils around digital inclusion, and relationships with the Universities of both Leeds and Bradford.
- A member of the marketing team at Bradford who had recently moved over from Leeds felt that they would be able to utilise a lot of recent and relevant experience, such as how to manage relationships with the press.

SAIL: having a sustainability partner working across Cities of Culture

SAIL is a West Yorkshire based, community interest company (CIC) whose mission is to create a zero carbon/zero waste future for the creative and cultural industries of West Yorkshire. Its partnerships with both Leeds and Bradford offered an example of how knowledge transfer can be sustained when a delivery partner moves between Cities/Years of Culture. SAIL's engagement with knowledge transfer was supported by their organisational aim to exchange knowledge around sustainability and to create networks where this can take place. SAIL's director described knowledge exchange as their 'raison d'être' and that their aim was to provide 'a structure for organisations to learn and share from each other'. As such, there was a natural fit with Shared Cultural Futures.

Evaluation of SAIL's involvement in Shared Cultural Futures suggests that:

- The timing of the partnerships with Leeds and Bradford, and the shared mission for knowledge exchange between SAIL and Shared Cultural Futures, were key success factors.
- The fact that Leeds 2023 and SAIL were developing as organisations at the same time worked well and fostered a reciprocal culture of learning. Both organisations were new and learning as they went along.
- Early onboarding into the Bradford team meant that SAIL was able to share recent learning from Leeds on what had and hadn't worked, informing thinking on early procurement and the greenlighting process for events, that were aligned with the sustainability framework.
- SAIL's experience with Leeds enabled them to feel more confident and assertive when embedding learning into Bradford's sustainability plan.

Ongoing commitment to knowledge exchange

A key theme that has emerged from this evaluation is the level of engagement and commitment to knowledge exchange as an ongoing process. This was evident in both the level of involvement in knowledge exchange activities and the high level of participation in evaluation conversations. There is a clear appetite and enthusiasm from both the Leeds and Bradford teams to pass on their knowledge to future Cities of Culture and a willingness to do this voluntarily. A few members of the Bradford team described this as part of their ongoing

responsibility: *'I should be available to the next city of culture'*. *'We're formalising something that should be happening anyway'*. This sentiment was echoed in other areas of the evaluation, with Cities of Culture being described a 'family', rather than comparators or competitors. The final conference, *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?*, embodied this sentiment, with many presenters expressing a commitment to support, and share learning and resources, across major events. The challenges and opportunities of facilitating ongoing knowledge exchange between cities of culture are explored in the [legacy and recommendations](#) sections of this report.



Photo by Robling Photography

Challenges

Timing and capacity

'The natural challenge is that one organisation is winding down while one is winding up'.

(LEEDS 2023 team member)

'The points in the lifecycles of the organisations were very different... and that created a few tensions that might have stopped some of the knowledge being shared as effectively or easily as possible'.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

A recurring theme across evaluation interviews was the challenges presented by the two organisations being in different phases of their delivery. Staff reflected that there was a significant gap in the lifecycle of the organisations, with Leeds coming to the end of their year of culture at a time when Bradford was setting up. This had implications for Shared Cultural Futures as *'both teams were extremely busy'* with setting up and winding down respectively. One of the biggest challenges was *'finding time to meet in mutually busy schedules'* and *'prioritising time... for reflection and lessons learned'* as well as finding time to log knowledge exchange interactions.

The time pressure also meant that some planned activities could not go ahead. For example, Bradford's Head of Production had planned to shadow their Leeds counterpart in December on the delivery of their closing event, but in the end, this was not possible.

Moreover, Bradford 2025 were at the very early stages of setting up their organisation, and didn't necessarily know what information they needed at this early stage. Some staff felt that the pressure to complete activities while Leeds staff were still in post meant that exchanges felt rushed and not as purposeful as they could have been: *'It sometimes made it feel like an add on'*. The timing when knowledge exchange activities started meant that the Bradford team had already developed some resources without support from Leeds: *'We spent a lot of time on it when we could have spent time on other things'*.

There was consensus across teams that knowledge exchange activities were implemented a bit too late, and it would have been beneficial for the timeline to be embedded earlier on in the year so that there was more overlap between the two organisations. Staff felt that this would have allowed more opportunities for reciprocal knowledge exchange, with Bradford sharing knowledge with Leeds before the end of their delivery year, as well as enabling the two teams to deliver knowledge sharing events collaboratively.

Matching roles and experience

There was a sense that knowledge exchange had been easier to implement between those with equivalent departments and roles and that the differences in organisational structures sometimes meant that there wasn't an obvious parallel. For example, the evaluation of LEEDS

2023 was largely conducted by an external consultancy in collaboration with the Experience Design team, while Bradford 2025 have their own evaluation team. Consequently, there had been less collaboration with Leeds around evaluation planning and set up and more conversations about evaluation tools, such as Leeds's data dashboard.

One member of the Bradford team reflected that there were some sensitivities around levels of experience in the early stages of the project and the type of information being shared. At the beginning of the project, the members of staff that had been recruited to the Bradford team were quite senior and experienced. Sensitivity was required in identifying what would be most useful and valuable without 'telling Bradford how to do it'. There were some concerns that aspects of the original plan risked 'teaching Bradford things they already knew' so this was adapted, and tailored around what Bradford felt would be most useful. Similarly, sensitivity was required in negotiating the differences and unique opportunities presented by Leeds as a Year of Culture which was largely self-funded, and Bradford as a designated UK City of Culture. The differences between the organisations and the implications for knowledge exchange is explored in more detail in the [learning and implementation](#) section of this report.

Systems

The Shared Cultural Futures project manager reflected that there was a list of systems to be used as part of the work plan which they tried to implement in the early stages. Her experience was that some of these systems, such as the project management software, did not offer the flexibility needed for two organisations which are '*in enormous flux*'. In future, a more flexible approach to project management may be more suitable, aligned with the understanding that knowledge exchange occurs in different ways, and that participants have preferences for different ways of working which are sometimes outside the confines of a structured programme.

While acknowledging that it was important to have a system to capture knowledge exchange interactions, some staff felt that the collaborative tracker document felt onerous and difficult to complete on top of the interaction itself. It was difficult to identify a straightforward solution to this, as it was felt that team members were best placed to describe what had taken place. One member of staff suggested that having someone with administrative responsibility for the tracker who could be cc'd into email interactions may help to remove some of this pressure.

Planning and communication

While communication between teams across the project has been overwhelmingly positive, there is scope for clarifying to all staff overall expectations around the programme and streamlining communications. One member of the team at Bradford said they would have liked a bit more clarity on the goal of knowledge exchange and *'clearer sense of what Cities of Culture are supposed to deliver'* as the project felt quite open-ended.



Photo by Robling Photography

3. Learning and implementation

Understand points of difference

‘Sharing what has worked well and what hasn’t is important, with the caveat of ‘this is the context in which we delivered’. This is crucial to knowledge exchange between Cities of Culture’.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

‘It’s really good to have that understanding but to then take that knowledge and apply it to your (own) circumstances’.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

A key learning from Shared Cultural Futures, and something that was mentioned by both teams, was how knowledge exchange between Cities of Culture must be understood in the context of their differences. Whilst geographic proximity and existing relationships were instrumental in facilitating knowledge exchange, it was acknowledged that LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025 are different organisations, with different structures and needs, as well as different creative visions and, despite their proximity, working in very different cities. Understanding these points of difference, and the opportunities that UK City of Culture designation affords is an important aspect of knowledge exchange:

‘Bradford being a City of Culture is totally different to Leeds being a Year of Culture... because of the opportunity that a UK City of Culture affords the city that wins the designation’ (Bradford 2025 team member).

Many Bradford staff felt that one of the most valuable things from the project was using what Leeds had done as a *‘trigger to think about how we’re doing what we are doing’* rather than just *‘adopting it lock, stock and barrel’*. The programme was an opportunity to *‘carefully and intentionally work through an approach to draw out the useful learning’* and to build confidence in their own approach. As one member of the team described it:

‘It’s given us more confidence in what we’re doing differently... and to not be unnerved by points of difference’ (Bradford 2025 team member).

One example of this related to Digital and Experience Design, where the Bradford team were able to consolidate their own approach following several conversations with Leeds:

‘The way they worked is probably going to be very different to the way we work but it’s been interesting to find out about their team structure and how they’ve actually built it and how they have seen digital design... and to see a couple of different ways of working on it. I had some interesting conversations and some helpful, important chats’ (Bradford 2025 team member).

Value of informal conversations for knowledge exchange

‘Getting to know each other through meeting frequently and informally means there’s no fear of judgement’.

(Bradford 2025 team member)

“How’ you engage with people is as important as the ‘what’ you are talking about’.

(LEEDS 2023 team member)

Participants from both teams emphasised the importance of informal opportunities for knowledge exchange, which sometimes fell outside of the remit of planned and structured activities. Many staff felt that the best environment for knowledge sharing was often ‘informal and unplanned’ and that a lot of knowledge exchange happened organically. Having informal conversations over coffee was useful for building rapport and made it *‘easier to be candid and share frustrations’*, as well as removing the pressure for their being an ‘outcome’ to the conversation. It was acknowledged that having a formalised, funded project supported and legitimised these informal exchanges and helped to create a culture of collaborative learning.

Embed a reflective culture

The opportunity to reflect as part of the evaluation of Shared Cultural Futures was valued highly by both teams. Several staff emphasised that there had been *‘very little time for reflection and learning’* within the tight delivery timeframes but that it was important to build this in, particularly when delivering at pace. As a result of this, the evaluation team at Bradford are planning to introduce more regular opportunities for staff reflection and formative feedback-giving, so that this can be built into the ongoing development and delivery of the programme. One member of staff suggested that this might also include moments where staff can *‘get together and do things’* as a way of supporting wellbeing.

Staff also felt that it would be useful to have access to the LEEDS 2023 evaluation findings earlier, even if they are provisional/draft, so that knowledge and approaches can be drawn upon as Bradford 2025 design their own evaluation framework.

Staff wellbeing and delivering at pace

Staff wellbeing emerged as an important theme for knowledge sharing between Cities of Culture, in an environment where the fast pace and a high-pressure environment can create a risk of burnout. Creating a supportive and reflective culture where staff feel safe to share emerged as a priority, but there were also concerns over whether the City of Culture 'model' was sustainable. A challenge that was mentioned several times through evaluation conversations and events was how to deliver a City of Culture in a way that is accessible for everyone, including the delivery team, allowing adequate time for communities to be consulted, for work to be made, and for the delivery team to stay happy and healthy. One speaker at *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?*, reflected that the pace of major events delivery may be 'ableist and unsustainable' and another that the phrase 'major event' can create a high degree of pressure. It was acknowledged that the attrition of some Leeds and Bradford staff, through the intensity of the work, was an impediment to knowledge exchange, as a lot of people with rich knowledge to share had left.

Staff had ideas and strategies for mitigating this, such as longer contracts, and reflected that scale doesn't have to 'mean big and expensive'; there is an opportunity to think differently about scale and pace, perhaps in relation to developing creative practice or deep community engagement.

A senior member of the Leeds team observed that the Shared Cultural Futures project demanded quite a lot from their team as they were *'being asked to reflect on mistakes at a time when they were at their tireddest and their resilience was low'*. Another member of the team questioned whether 'knowledge exchange' was the right term for the process because in their experience it had felt a little extractive. They felt that this could be a particular issue for freelance staff who were being asked to share a lot of their experience and knowledge at the end of their contract without necessarily having another role to go to. The fact that many staff were interested in applying for equivalent roles at Bradford complicated this process further, and they felt it was important to make a distinction between personal knowledge and organisational knowledge in this context. Having a clear agenda for meetings, with questions thought out in advance, was suggested as something that would give staff more time to prepare and allow more of a dialogue to take place. It is recognised that this suggestion sits in contrast to the benefits of informal and ad hoc knowledge transfer. A question for further

exploration may be whether certain topics lend themselves to informal exchange and others to more structured and planned exchanges.

Knowledge exchange as iterative and imperfect

We are bringing our knowledge and experience into an environment which is new to everybody’.

(Bradford 2025 team member)



Photo by Robling Photography

A member of the Bradford team explained that the team are new to working a project of this scale and it was important to remember that everyone was on a learning journey. A parallel was drawn at *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?* between the iterative nature of building environmental sustainability into a short-term organisation and the iterative nature of knowledge exchange between Cities of Culture. Acknowledging that this process is imperfect felt like an important aspect of the learning, as well as recognising the challenges of exchanging knowledge when delivering at pace. There was a sense that Leeds hadn't had much space and time to reflect since their Year of Culture and both organisations felt that drawing on wider knowledge and contacts from Hull and Coventry Cities of Culture had also been valuable. There was an emphasis on the Cities of Culture 'family' and a need to shift away from an idea that they are 'competition' to one which acknowledges that they are all on a learning journey.

4. Enhancing knowledge exchange through participatory events

'We need major events because we have major challenges. These are often the result of human behaviour. Artists help us reflect upon our

culture and imagine possible new ones. Art creates meaning and community’.

(Sjored Bootsma, keynote speaker: *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?*)

Participatory events represented an important opportunity to share learning from Shared Cultural Futures more widely across the cultural, creative and major event sectors. As one of the organisers of *Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?* reflected, a key challenge is how to capture learning in a way that is useful to the wider industry and community ‘*before that learning disappears*’. Staff explained that the intention of knowledge exchange helped to give these events a clear focus, ensuring there was strong buy-in from staff and organisers, with the understanding that this knowledge could help future Cities of Culture and large-scale cultural events.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow?

Date: 13th March 2024

Location: University of Bradford

Attendees: 108

This sector-facing conference was reflective of West Yorkshire’s unique context but drew on major events experts from around the country and across Europe, including Cities and Capitals of Culture but also major events more widely.

The opening drumming performance by

Punjabi Roots and lively compering from local journalist Nick

Ahad set the celebratory tone for the event, which acknowledged the deep learning and

knowledge that exists across the many Cities of Culture. Performances from local artists Kirsty Taylor and KG rooted the celebration in Bradford and celebrated its young population. There was an emphasis on the Cities of Culture ‘family’ and the need to support and share learning



Photo by Robling Photography

and resources. Presenters were candid about sharing what worked and what hadn't and there was a sense that the 'failures' were an important part of the journey.

A recurring theme across the day was the 'mental leap' experienced by many Cities of Culture when they discover they have been awarded the title 'against the odds'. Having a collective ambition, dreaming big, and imagining the impossible were mentioned several times, with case studies from historical major events about achieving big things in very little time. Others included the wider topic of legacy and how UK Cities of Culture measure themselves against other large and mega events such as The Olympics, The Commonwealth Games and European Cities of Culture.

An experience survey, completed by event delegates, gave insights into the type of organisations and sectors that were in attendance, their motivations for attending, and what they learned from the event. Due to the relatively low response rate, these results should be understood as indicative rather than representative of conference attendees overall.

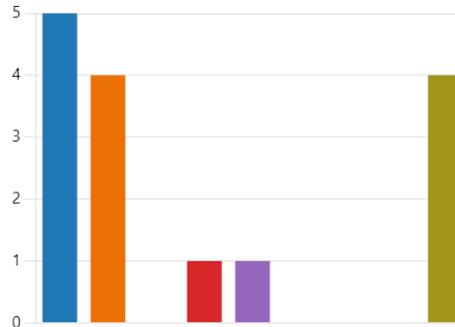
- A third of respondents represented an arts or cultural sector organisation in West Yorkshire, and approximately 27% of respondents represented a national arts or cultural organisation.
- Approximately 7% of respondents represented an academic institution or local authority.
- Around 27% of respondents listed their organisation as 'other', e.g. not an arts or cultural sector organisation, local authority, academic institution or funding organisation.

3. What type of organisation do you represent?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

● Arts / cultural sector organisatio...	5
● Arts / cultural sector organisatio...	4
● Arts / cultural sector organisatio...	0
● Local Authority / Local Governm...	1
● Academic Institution	1
● Government Department	0
● Funding Organisation	0
● Prefer not to say	0
● Other	4

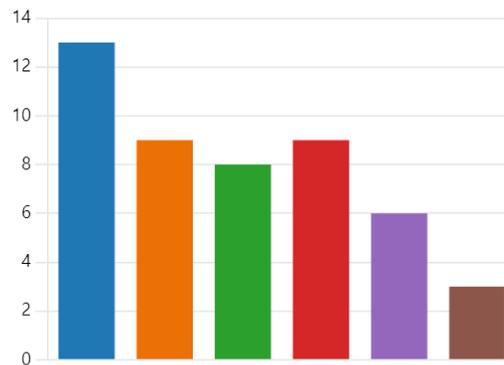


When asked about their motivations for attending, an interest in the content was the most popular response, with professional development and networking also featuring as motivations.

2. What motivated you to get involved? (select all that apply)

[More Details](#)

● The content seemed interesting	13
● My own professional developm...	9
● I was already involved with the ...	8
● To meet new people / network	9
● To celebrate culture and creativity	6
● Other	3

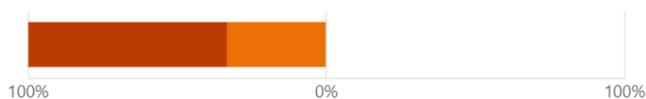


67% of respondents rated their overall experience of the event as 'very good' and 33% rated their experience as 'good'.

11. How would you rate your overall experience of the event?

[More Details](#)

■ Very good ■ Good ■ Neither good nor poor ■ Poor ■ Very poor ■ Don't know / not applicable



This positive feedback was reiterated in comments posted on social media following the conference, which provided insights into highlights for individual delegates:

'... the talk Sjored gave was an excellent keynote and that slide in particular was the pinnacle. That he was able to follow it up with one of the best stories about 'legacy' that I've every heard was the icing on the cake'.

'I've attended many conferences over the years but rarely come away feeling as stimulated as I did from yesterday's 'Here today gone tomorrow? Major events and why we do them' in Bradford. Great lineup of UK and international speakers, honest presentations acknowledging challenges and learnings as well as much needed open discussions about legacy and evaluation. Real knowledge exchange in practice. Well done to [LEEDS 2023 Bradford 2025 UK City of Culture](#) and [Spirit of 2012](#)'.

'It was a fantastic event, which I was really grateful for getting a last-minute place. Having just got off the Kirklees Year of Music rollercoaster, it was a perfect opportunity to listen to a wide range of perspectives from others working in the same space... Great performances, a diverse group of speakers and most importantly a real sense of excitement building in the region for what promises to be another amazing couple of years for arts and culture'.

When asked about **what they discovered through the conference**, 'events' was the most popular response, with accessibility, legacy and delivering events at scale also emerging as themes. The results are summarised in the word cloud below:

11 respondents (73%) answered **events** for this question.



Delegates were asked what they were **interested in learning more about or doing more of** following the event. Responses included:

- Digging deeper into the evaluation of major events.
- Doing collaborative projects.
- Commissioning more work connected to festivals.
- Exploring accessibility at events.
- More networking.

When asked **how major events can best share knowledge and learning**, responses included:

- Offering similar face to face events in the future.
- Providing case studies of successes and lessons learned.
- Building in shared learning mechanisms from the outset, such as collaborative forums, action learning sets, peer reflection and mentoring.
- Sharing findings and finding creative and succinct ways to disseminate them publicly.
- More critical analysis of challenges alongside successes.

Delegates were also asked **what other subjects / themes would be of interest to them in relation to knowledge transfer between major events**. Responses included:

- Audience development, marketing, comms and governance.
- Data insights and challenges.
- More case studies on 'what works' and 'what doesn't'.
- Co-production, community-led work and running successful events with amateur groups.
- Sustainability and climate change.
- Legacy planning.

Access and major events

A panel discussion on access and major events was led by Toni-Dee Paul (artist and facilitator), Will Renel (Touretteshero), Alison Colborn (Mind the Gap), Gill Crawshaw (freelance curator) and Jay Millard (access and inclusion consultant and Head of Access for LEEDS 2023). It included lots of practical learning from LEEDS 2023 around embedding access across a city of culture.

The panel articulated that access is not always a collective commitment or way of being within arts organisations, let alone short-term arts organisations and made a number of suggestions for how major events can embed access across the work that they do. These included:

- The importance of having an access role in post from the very beginning before the programme is decided, so that access considerations inform decision making from the outset. The panel talked about having a 'through line' of access across an organisation so that it is embedded across the programme and not just an add on.
- The need for time and flexibility to have meaningful and accessible consultation and the importance of understanding different requirements. Asking people what they need is an important question to ask at the beginning of the process.
- The politics of knowledge sharing came up in relation to disabled people often being asked to give their expertise and time for free. One of the speakers talked about the challenge of achieving a balance between '*wanting to share so much but not wanting to tell them how to do it*'. Identifying practical ways in which learning can be carried forwards also emerged as important.
- Providing different options for BSL (British Sign Language), ASL (American Sign Language) and captions for people to choose from at an event can be valuable as well as having an interpreter positioned on a raised platform.
- Recognising that evaluation templates/requirements provided by funders may not be accessible and to consider having conversations with funders at the beginning about how to make reporting most accessible.
- For organisations to include an honest, matter of fact, and easy to find acknowledgement in marketing materials for shows if events are not accessible without attendees having to search for this information.



Photo by Robling Photography

Are we measuring the right things?: Evaluation session

A panel session on evaluation was facilitated by Dr Beatriz Garcia (Centre for Cultural Value), Jonothan Neelands (Warwick Business School / Coventry City of Culture), Kully Thiarai (LEEDS 2023), Amy Finch (Spirit of 2012), and Giles Dring (Open Innovations). The panel explored some of the challenges and opportunities that are specific to evaluating major and temporary cultural events. Key themes included:

- The importance of evaluating processes as well as measuring ‘things’, and to unearth the stories behind the numbers.
- Encouraging the cultural sector to embrace evaluation as a tool that gives space to reflect and tell stories.
- Exploring methods for evaluating the ‘how and why’ of major events experiences, particularly how events were experienced differently, at different times, by different people.
- The value of collaborating, and repeating approaches that have worked well.
- An opportunity to move beyond 'hearsay' to recognising how things are different as to expected, and how this can be used as part of learning and to ‘change the story’.

- A need to move away from evaluation as an almost defensive activity... to one which supports a culture of learning?
- Evaluation as a tool for ongoing learning both during and after an event.

Not Just an Island: International Panel session

Chaired by Skinder Hundal MBE (Director of Arts at the British Council), this panel explored how we better connect to and learn from international peers. A key question which framed discussions was how do we maintain our international connections, and remain part of a Global ecosystem? Bringing together international leaders in major events and cultural infrastructure, panellists included Karishma Bhaghani (Cultural and Creative Producer, Kenya), Claire McColgan (Liverpool Director of Culture) Phil Batty (Bradford 2025 Trustee) and Sami Ylisaari (Oulu, Finland 2026 European City of Culture). Key themes included:

- The concepts of 'being global' and 'consuming global culture', and the need to think about 'being international' as a constructive, rather than a destructive force.
- The potential for international work to enable cities to move from "look at me" to "look at this". When international work is done well, we see it for what it is rather than as an international piece of work.
- The time it takes to do internationalism well shouldn't be underestimated, and it needs to be in the DNA of how a programme is designed.
- The notion that separations are defined by borders and dominance and that 'we are only international once we are separated'.
- That the starting point for international work needs to be around listening and talking to people in local communities, hearing their stories, and then building outwards: "what is the 'us' that can bring us together?"

SAIL: Creating Sustainable Events

Date: 4th March 2024

Location: Salts Mill, Saltaire, Bradford

Attendees: 78

This event, hosted by SAIL, aimed to share learning around sustainability in short term, major events. Drawing on SAIL's experience as the LEEDS 2023 sustainability partner and as the new sustainability partner for Bradford 2025, there was a key opportunity to share tangible learning from recent events, and to explore how this learning was being embedded into the Bradford 2025 delivery plan.

The majority of attendees represented arts, culture and heritage organisations in the West Yorkshire district, including 12 members of the Bradford 2025 team. There was also attendance from West Yorkshire local authority staff and freelance practitioners.

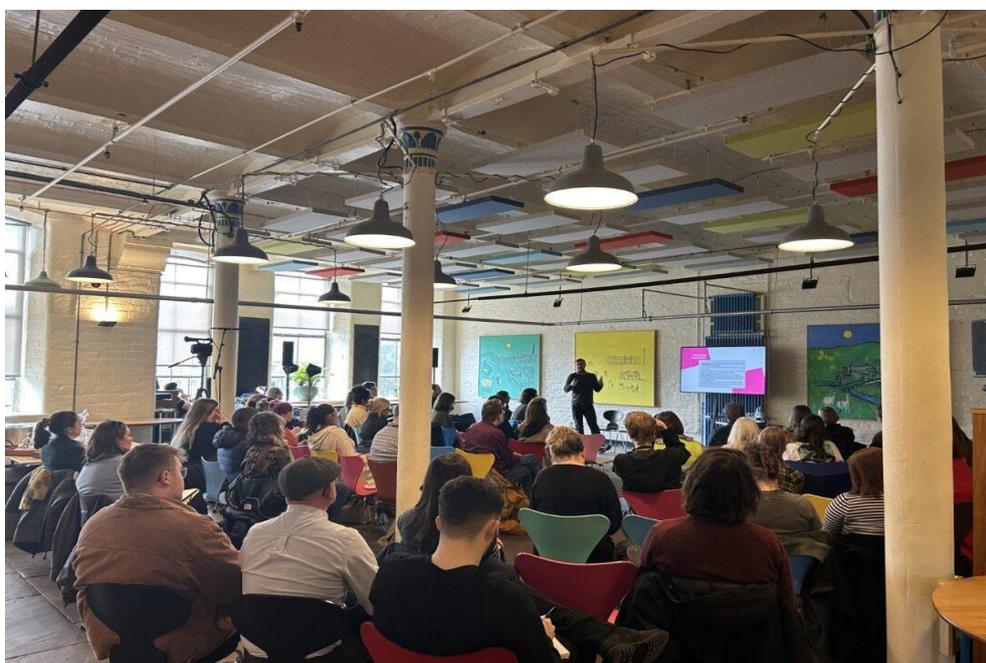


Photo by SAIL

The event included presentations from industry professionals on their insights and approaches to embedding sustainable practices in their events, followed by a panel discussion on sustainable event management. Success stories and learnings from LEEDS 2023 were shared, with examples of how this learning would be used with Bradford 2025. Having members of the Leeds and Bradford teams on the panel was a good example of how knowledge and advice can be disseminated collaboratively between Cities of Culture in a more sector-facing format. This was enabled/supported by:

- An interactive approach, including a Slido which was used to gather some benchmarking data from the audience around their sustainability needs and to facilitate a Q&A session between delegates and panel members.
- Insights from different industry professionals/roles on their approaches to embedding sustainable practices.
- Considering sustainability in a broad sense, including audience travel, waste management, energy and accessibility and the implications for different areas, e.g. planning and pre-production, marketing and delivery.
- A balance of success stories and case studies of where things didn't work: this included reflection on time and budgeting challenges, and the difficulties of embedding sustainability into some Leeds events while the programme was already underway.
- Event specific learning, e.g how they adapted for Leeds' opening event during a train strike.
- Examples of how this learning is feeding into the development of Bradford 2025's sustainability framework.

Cultural Education Conference

Date: 4th December 2023

Location: Tetley Gallery, Leeds

Attendees: 156

The **Cultural Education Conference** was delivered in partnership with the Leeds Cultural Education Partnership, whose new brand **Leeds 33** was launched at the event.

It was an action-packed day filled with senior leaders and professionals from across education and culture, from Leeds, Bradford and wider West Yorkshire, talking about what had been learned through the LEEDS 2023 education programme, and featuring provocation and inspiration from key note speakers, including Erica Whyman OBE who talked to the packed audience about courage in leadership.

The day included workshops on specific curriculum areas and sharing of best practice, particularly noting where current practitioners are unaware of models that worked well in the past. It was highlighted that resources are not readily available and so new teachers and practitioners are often reinventing the wheel.

There were panel discussions featuring examples of creative thinking applied across projects and the curriculum and how people are making that work in the current climate.

A marketplace ran all day featuring providers of cultural education specialist resources and provision. It was a day of learning, conversation, and connection, heading towards the end of the Year of Culture and looking to the future of arts and cultural education in West Yorkshire and beyond.

5. Legacy and recommendations

‘A key question I think it’s useful to ask is ‘what do you wish you’d done at the beginning?’.

(Bradford 2025 team member).

Shared Cultural Futures set out to explore whether there is an ideal or better model for knowledge transfer between short term organisations. Evaluation has given insight into the effectiveness and replicability of different knowledge transfer approaches while also revealing how knowledge exchange can be enabled and enhanced by geographic proximity and the timings of major events. There are some tangible learnings and recommendations that have emerged from the project, which can be applied to knowledge exchange processes between future short-term organisations and major events. A challenge is ensuring that this information moves between Cities of Culture and is held in a place and a format that people can access. The following 10 recommendations have been created with future Cities/Years of Culture, and their funders, in mind.

1. Embed knowledge exchange from the beginning

Embedding knowledge exchange at the early stages of an organisation and starting activities earlier can maximise opportunities for knowledge exchange and enable organisations to plan key activities at a time where they have capacity. Having a joint kick off moment between the two teams and building a formal moment into the handover process between Cities of Culture may help to set expectations and embed sharing from the start.

Building in a longer lead-in time will enable organisations to have more time to schedule and deliver activities and for them to happen earlier, before an organisation has started to develop their own policies and procedures. This will help to prevent the duplication of resources and allow for time to be spent on other things.

The proximity of Bradford and Leeds allowed for regular face-to-face interactions, which were important for relationship building. While this may not be possible for future Cities of Culture, adequate lead-in time and forward planning will enable organisations to build in face-to-face meetings in advance, at key moments, after which conversations can happen online. The

distance between organisations may help to facilitate this process as face-to-face interactions will have to be scheduled far in advance.

2. Having a dedicated knowledge exchange role at Cities of Culture

Shared Cultural Futures participants felt that there was scope to do more but capacity needs to be built into bids to facilitate this. Ideally there needed to be a dedicated person within a City of Culture to convene the knowledge exchange space. This would ensure that the process is 'led' but also that each department is involved in knowledge exchange, as some departments at Leeds and Bradford did not take part. Having a dedicated knowledge exchange officer could help to ensure that the process is 'led' and alleviate some of the pressure of planning and capturing knowledge transfer, as well as thinking from the outset about how learning can be shared not only with future Cities of Culture, but also with wider stakeholders including Local Authorities, local cultural partners, educational bodies and funder. This would address the role of UK City of Culture in broader capacity building.

3. A toolkit or start up pack for major events

A key recommendation from this project is for a toolkit or asset bank to be created for Cities of Culture or other major events to use at set-up stage. This could include draft role descriptions, templates, options analyses, key policy and process documents, guidance on economic impact evaluation and on engaging with local funders, so that they don't have to create everything from scratch. The emphasis on the toolkit should be supportive rather than prescriptive so as not to stifle innovation: *'you can improvise from that foundation.... It can be supportive and guiding rather than prescriptive'*. There was a sense that for Cities of Culture this should be a DCMS-funded, centralised resource that could be updated as needed. There was also a suggestion for a core start up team to support with organisation set-up.

4. A formal expectation of knowledge exchange from funders

'There is no formal process of handover between Cities of Culture which feels strange...'

(Bradford team member)

Participants reflected that a more active, structured approach from funders around knowledge exchange would be valuable - alongside a toolkit - so that expectations are more formally built in from the outset. Suggestions included DCMS facilitating an official/mandatory roundtable between the handing over and new City of Culture which forms *'part of the relationship with any designated winning city of culture'* where key learnings are shared efficiently. Participants also recommended a more joined up approach from funding bodies in exchanging knowledge and sharing learning with prospective grant applicants: *'projecting upwards and asking more of the organisations funding that activity... sharing knowledge from one generation of grantees to the next'*. While the Bradford team felt that a cross departmental knowledge exchange day would have been difficult to schedule within the time constraints, a senior management knowledge sharing day did feel feasible.

5. Sharing relationships with local authorities and local funders

The Bradford team reflected that conversations with regional funders sometimes felt that they were starting from scratch. Though this recommendation relates mostly to the North of England, the Bradford team felt it would be valuable to explore ways of cultivating funder circles at regional levels, particularly in relation to philanthropy and individual giving. One suggestion would be to have other agencies work with Cities of Culture to encourage that activity, or to host an annual conference for arts philanthropy in the North of England.

Participants also felt that it would be useful to incorporate specific knowledge sharing around building and maintaining relationships with the local authority sector. As a member of the senior management team at Bradford reflected: *'This will affect every year of culture – how you navigate the relationship with your local cultural sector is a shared challenge but doesn't necessarily fit with the confines of a time-limited project'* (Bradford 2025 team member). This includes a consideration of how much knowledge exchange is taking place between local authorities and the extent to which a City of Culture should be facilitating this.



Photo by Robling Photography

6. Sharing relevant evaluation and benchmarking data

The Bradford team felt that one of the things that was missing from the knowledge exchange project was the sharing of benchmarking data, particularly in relation to campaign activity:

'It would be useful to have some benchmarks to measure how successful campaign activity is... from a comparative project... understanding the scale that we're likely to be working at. For example, if we understand our reach on Instagram, it might help us to better plan our spend on that channel for paid advertising'.

Sharing evaluation and benchmarking data, even if it is provisional, may help new Cities of Culture to develop their own benchmarks, and to have more consistency in the development of KPIs. The LEEDS 2023 data dashboard was a helpful starting point for Bradford as they started to develop their evaluation and monitoring approach. The national framework being developed will support this so long as it is also adopted by funders.

7. Streamlining systems and processes

Participants felt that there was an opportunity to streamline systems and processes to make the knowledge exchange process more efficient and effective. This included informing staff

earlier that the knowledge exchange initiative would be taking place so that they knew to keep documents, records, and logs and having a defined structure in place early, so that staff felt more comfortable about passing on information. Collating key policy and process documents and sharing a 'who's who' and FAQs ahead of more formal knowledge exchange activities was recommended, although it was also acknowledged that this is reliant on staff capacity.

8. Sharing within as well as between organisations

It was felt that there was an opportunity for knowledge exchange to be more cross cutting so that learning is shared across the organisation instead of being 'trapped' within teams. Suggestions for this included bringing together all of the heads of teams in one room and having an induction to the new City of Culture and their team: ideally this should occur in person, with everyone in the room together, so that staff can meet everyone and identify points of learning and connection across teams, not just in their equivalent roles. Another suggestion was for provisional/headline evaluation data to be shared, as appropriate, so that learning could be considered at programme as well as departmental level.

9. A fellowship or network of major event experts

[We need] 'a consistent something behind each year of culture'.

(LEEDS 2023 team member).

'I think there are some things that do not change for Cities of Culture... You need large scale, outdoors events to engage audiences with... to create a programme that engages with the culture and creativity of communities.... You need spectacle and depth ... it doesn't matter what your context is...'

(Bradford 2025 team member).

It was acknowledged that knowledge transfer between Cities of Culture is often based on goodwill and that there is a large pool of untapped knowledge and potential which could be drawn upon by having a live network or fellowship of people with relevant experience. There

were different suggestions for how this could work. A group of freelance consultants that move between Cities of Culture and help to build infrastructure and operations was one approach, with the caveat that each City of Culture was unique, and it was important that *'identikit models were not produced'*.

Another suggestion was that this support might be available through a fellowship or network of people made up of different levels/roles, whereby people apply to be part of a directory and are willing to be contacted. Ideally, knowledge transfer would become part of the expectation of major events. However, it was also acknowledged that many cities of culture staff – especially producers – are freelance, so capturing that knowledge and passing it on is a challenge: *'People who will have retained knowledge will go back into the freelance world and if you want them to pass that on you do need to pay them'*.

Another suggestion was for a group/mentoring scheme where people can access support and draw on people's experiences at different stages, such as bidding, set up, delivery and wind down, so that there is a continuous handing down process. A challenge is balancing people's commitment to knowledge exchange as 'something they should be doing anyway' with the practicalities and ethics of drawing on people's knowledge and capacity after they have left an organisation.

10. Is making mistakes part of the journey?

When reflecting on whether there is an 'ideal or better model for knowledge transfer', one of the most interesting questions that has emerged is the extent to which Cities of Culture need to make their own mistakes as part of their individual journey. While there is a clear call for not reinventing the wheel or wasting resources, some participants talked about the value of pulling something apart and rebuilding it as part of the learning process. There is, perhaps, a delicate balance to be struck in sharing valuable tools, resources and structures which can alleviate some of the pressures around operational set up, drawing out the things that are 'core' or consistent to any City of Culture, while also understanding the local context and unique moment in which it takes place. Acknowledging differences in creative ambition and organisational structure, alongside the uniqueness of time and place reminds us success will look different for each Year of Culture and the communities that it serves. This difference, at the heart of any place-based arts project, will be fundamental as Bradford 2025 develop its

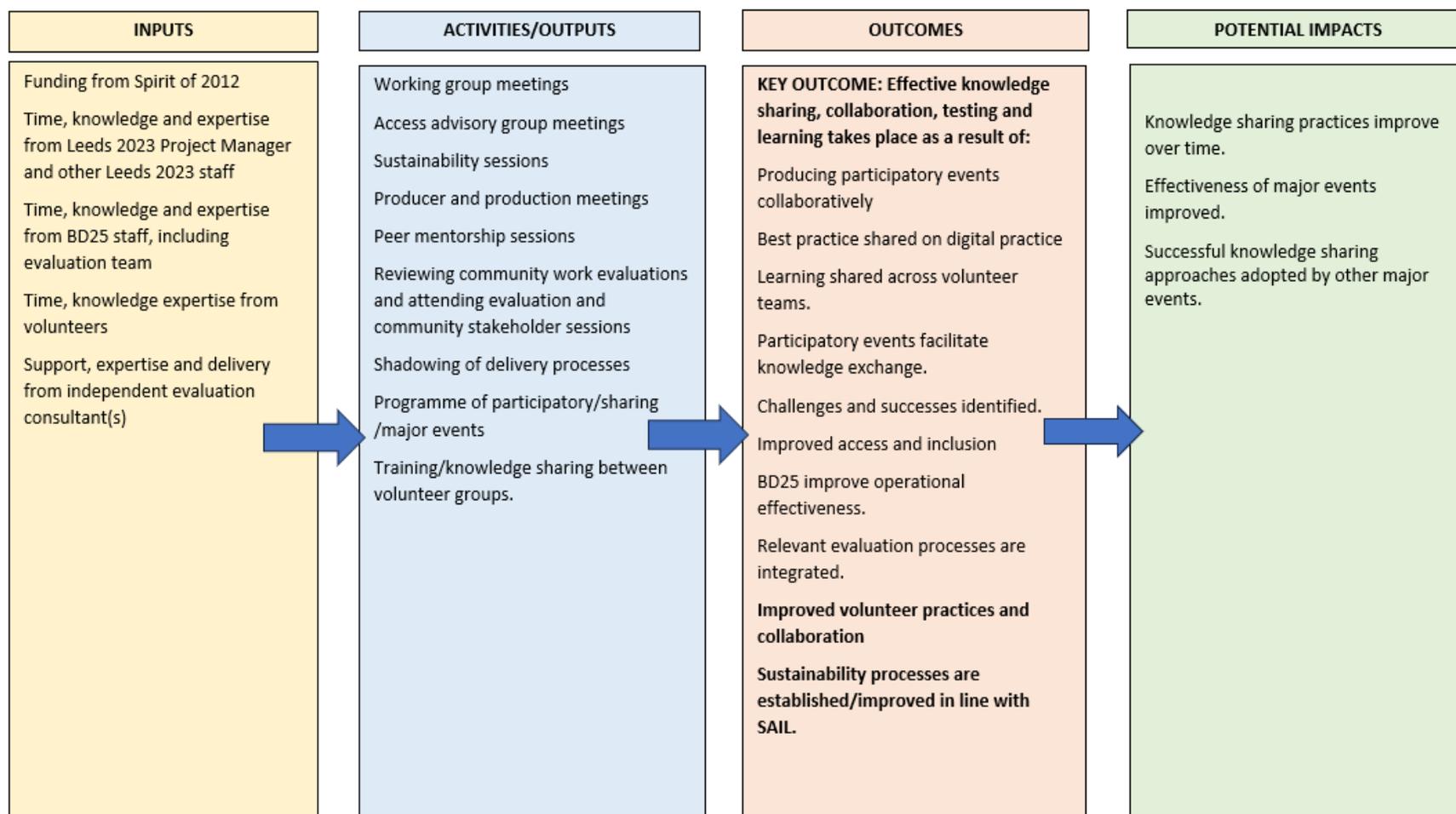
own evaluation approach, and considers how the knowledge and legacy captured within in it can be of benefit to both the next City of Culture and to the District that it serves.

Appendices

- i. Evaluation logic model
- ii. Event survey
- iii. List of files shared between teams

i. Evaluation Logic Model

A logic model is a simple way of presenting, and understanding, the overarching relationships between the resources in the project, how they support the planned activities and the anticipated changes or results (the outcomes and impacts).



ii Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? Event Survey

Here Today Gone Tomorrow? Major events and why we do them

Participants survey

Thank you for participating in this event.

We are committed to ensuring our events and activities can be enjoyed by everyone. By completing this short survey, you'll help us to understand who is participating and what you thought - your feedback will help us to reach more people in future.

By completing this survey, you're agreeing to share this data with Leeds 2023, Bradford 2025, West Yorkshire Combined Authority and the Spirit of 2012 who are supporting this event. We will process your data securely and in accordance with data protection law.

The survey will take around 5 minutes to complete.

1. How did you find out about today's event?

2. What motivated you to get involved? (select all that apply)

- It seemed like an interesting opportunity
 - For fun / to enjoy myself
 - To express myself creatively / artistically
 - To learn something / develop my skills
 - Because of the content
 - To do something new / out of the ordinary
 - My own professional development
 - I was already involved with the person / people who were organising the event
 - To meet new people / network
 - Because it is local to me
 - To celebrate culture and creativity
 - Someone else encouraged me to get involved
 - Other – please specify
-

3. What type of organisation do you represent?

- Arts / cultural sector organisation - West Yorkshire

- Arts Cultural sector organisation - National
 - Arts Cultural sector organisation - International
 - Local Authority / Local Government
 - Academic Institution
 - Government Department
 - Funding Organisation
 - Prefer not to say
 - Other (please specify)
-



4. As a result of attending, I have discovered more about:

Enter your answer

5. As a result of attending, I am now interested in learning / doing more:

Enter your answer

6. How do you feel major events can best share knowledge and learning?

Enter your answer

7. How do you feel major events need to adapt to continue to be successful in the future?

Enter your answer



8. **What other subjects / themes would be of interest to you in relation to knowledge transfer between major events?**

Enter your answer

9. Thinking about your experience of this event, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know / not applicable
I enjoyed myself at the event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It felt like an inclusive event where everyone was welcome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learnt something new	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoyed spending time with colleagues at the event	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I was able to access new contacts and networks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

⋮

10. How would you rate this event for the following?

	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	Don't know / not applicable
Information in advance and at the event	<input type="radio"/>					
Meeting your access needs (e.g. physical, sensory, social or communication, cognitive or other access needs)	<input type="radio"/>					
Facilities at and around the event (including food & drink facilities)	<input type="radio"/>					
The staff and volunteers at the event	<input type="radio"/>					

11. How would you rate your overall experience of the event?

Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor	Don't know / not applicable
<input type="radio"/>					

12. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience of the event?

About you

The monitoring questions have been designed to align with the way the UK government collects Census data, as well as the data collected by other main UK funding bodies such as Arts Council England. If the

phrasing of any questions or answer options do not feel inclusive of how you identify, please select one of the "Other" options, and you will be given the option to self-define below. If there are any you'd rather not answer, please choose "Prefer not to say" or skip to the next question.

17. What is the full postcode of your organisation?

18. Which of the following best describes your gender identity?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- I describe my gender identity in another way
- Prefer not to say
- Other

19. What is your ethnic group?

- Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British: Chinese
- Asian or Asian British: Indian
- Asian or Asian British: Pakistani
- Asian or Asian British: Other Asian background
- Black or Black British: African
- Black or Black British: Caribbean
- Black or Black British: Other Black/African/ Caribbean background
- Mixed: White and Asian
- Mixed: White and Black African
- Mixed: White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed: Other Mixed/multiple ethnic background

- White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British
- White: Irish
- White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- White: Roma
- White: Other White background
- Other ethnic group: Arab
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say
- Other

20. Do you identify as a D/deaf or disabled person, or have a long-term health condition?

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

iii. List of files shared between teams

Files shared between LEEDS 2023 and Bradford 2025, using the central file sharing system

BRADFORD 2025 DEVELOPMENT TEAM SHARING:

- Corporate Due Diligence questions template
- Ethical_Policy

BRADFORD 2025 OPS SHARING:

- Data Protection Policy
- Induction Presentation
- IT and Communications Policy
- LEEDS 2023 Staff Handbook
- Operational and Statutory Training Items
- Privacy Notice

TRAINING MODULES:

- Adult Safeguarding Training Module
- Cyber Security Training Module
- Display Screen Equipment Assessment Module
- DSE Training Module Resources
- Fire Marshall Update
- Fire Safety Training Module
- Full GDPR Training Module
- General Health and Safety Training Module
- Manual Handling Training Module
- Safer Recruitment Training Module

CREATIVE TEAM SHARING:

- 220214_CIM Roll Out Press
- Project Management Recommendations

PLACEMENTS AND STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES LEGACY RESOURCES

- Placement Agreement_Template
- Placement Opportunities Early planning 21-22
- Placements Strategy
- Placement Provider Tripartite Agreement Template

STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES KNOWLEDGE SHARING EVENT:

- 240122_LEEDS 2023 Event Presentation Slides
- GROW activity responses
- LEEDS 2023 Student Industry Opportunities
- Leeds HE and FE Student Opportunities Overview
- Student Opportunities Contact List
- Template_Initial Conversation with Placement Student
- Template_Personal and Professional Development & Work Plan
- Template_Placement Agreement
- Template_Placement and Student Opportunities Closing Conversation
- Template_Placement and Student Opportunities Review Meetings

- Template_Role Description

SUPERVISOR AND LINE MANAGER RESOURCES:

- 1 – Student opportunity supervisor guidance
- 2 – initial conversation with placement student_template
- 3 – Personal and professional development & work plan_template
- 4 – Career needs assessment_template
- 5 – Placement and student opportunity review meetings_template
- 6 – Placement and student opportunity closing conversation_template