

Funding to support second-place City of Culture bidding cities' volunteering infrastructure

What are the conditions for success?

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Table of contents

Introduction	03
1. What is a 'successful' bid?	06
1.1 Introduction to bids	06
1.2 Ingredients for success	08
1.2.1 Partnership	08
1.2.2 Inclusion	12
1.2.3 Long-term investment	14
2. What is a 'good' volunteer infrastructure?	17
2.1 Introduction to volunteering and volunteer infrastructure	17
2.2 Ingredients for success	18
2.2.1 Managerial structures	19
2.2.2 Sustaining volunteer networks	21
2.2.3 Emphasising diversity and inclusion	23
3. The virtuous cycle	27
3.1 Birmingham, Sheffield and Norwich	28
3.2 Hull	29
3.2.1 A community and place-based attitude	29
3.2.2 Good pre-existing cultural resources	30
3.2.3 A positive cultural sector mentality	31
4. Conclusion: Recommendations for second place funding	32
4.1 Overview	32
4.2 Recommendations	33

Using innovation to increase
social connection



Introduction

This report was written at the early stages of our role as learning partner on Spirit of 2012's Volunteering Cities Funding programme. We are working with 4 grantees of this programme – Great Yarmouth, Medway, Conwy and Bradford – all of whom bid for the UK City of Culture 2025 title.

While Bradford won this title, the others were strong competitors who all demonstrated plans to reform their volunteering infrastructures. We are grateful for each of these grantees for their time in sharing insights which have helped this report immensely. This report is both shaped by their stories and is designed to help shape the future of their volunteering infrastructure journeys.

Our goal in this report is to establish the conditions for the successful impact of funding for 'second placers' following a city of culture bid, with a focus on how this funding can support volunteering infrastructure in the best possible way. Our hope is that this report will be used to help both funders and bidding cities shape their strategies to maximise impact.

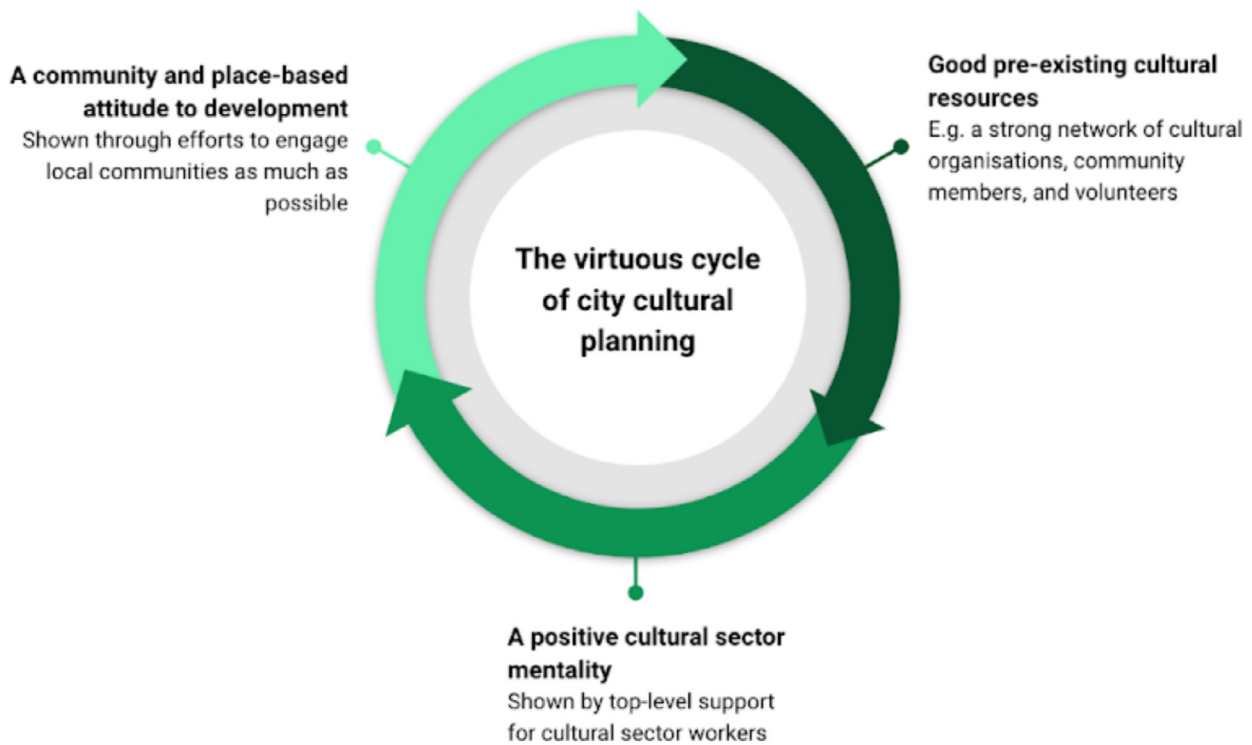
To achieve this goal, we seek to answer two more specific questions:

What makes a 'successful' City of Culture bid, paying particular attention to the bidding process?

What constitutes 'good' volunteer infrastructure?

We argue that securing a 'successful' bidding process and having a 'good' volunteer infrastructure are **necessary** for second place funding to lead to beneficial outcomes.

We will show that a city must achieve the 'virtuous cycle of cultural planning'¹ to have both a successful bid and a good volunteer infrastructure, and therefore, for second place funding to be beneficial following a failed bid:



The virtuous cycle describes how different aspects of a city's cultural planning are dependent on one another for success. For example, a positive cultural sector mentality will guide community outreach initiatives, leading to a boost in cultural sector resources and further justifying the positive cultural mentality displayed by local governance. Equally, establishing strong connections between local governance (such as local councils) and cultural venues can lead to a more positive cultural sector mentality, encouraging a greater engagement with community groups which in turn will enhance cultural resources in a region.

The virtuous cycle helps to explain why some cities can fail to achieve a successful UK City of Culture bid or volunteer infrastructure despite investing heavily in their cultural sector mentality or their cultural resources. Below, we highlight some examples in which this was the case.

In this report, we explore what it means for a bid to be 'successful' and for a city's volunteer infrastructure to be considered 'good'. We also discuss why both these aspects are necessary for volunteer infrastructure support to succeed. Through the virtuous cycle, we show why many aspects of a city's bid and pre-existing resources must be in place for second place funding to lead to benefit. This has important consequences for deciding what cities ought to receive this type of funding, and which may require other support models. We end with a set of recommendations that grant-making organisations, such as Spirit of 2012 can use to support potential grantees, helping to ensure that any future second place funding is used in the best way possible.

Throughout this report, we draw on a range of case studies from successful bids, such as Galway 2020 and Liverpool 2008. We also draw insights from cities that lost bids and yet still experienced significant cultural and economic success as a result of the bidding process, such as Newcastle-Gateshead 2008. Similarly, the AHRC-funded project, which brought together Birmingham, Sheffield and Norwich following their 2013 bids, forms an important resource for us here. We have also drawn heavily on more general academic literature, such as Dr. Helen Timbrell's current work on ethnic minorities' experiences in volunteer spaces, Dr. Beatriz Garcia's exploration of Liverpool 2008's volunteering, and Richards & Palmer's 2010 book *Eventful Cities*, on the social, cultural and economic impact of large scale city events.

We combine this literature with insights shared with us through deep-dive conversations with Spirit of 2012 Volunteering Cities Fund grantees 2022-2025 and a grantee workshop day facilitated by Neighbourly Lab in November 2022.

1. What is a 'successful' bid?

1.1 Introduction to bids

It is widely acknowledged that bidding for a title such as the UK Capital of Culture can bring about large scale social and economic benefit to a place, irrespective of whether the city actually succeeds in winning the title. For this reason, a successful bid is not necessarily one that wins a national competition, but rather, is one that leads to sustainable cultural and economic development irrespective of the competition outcome. In other words, a successful bid is a non-contingent bid.

Whether a bid is successful depends heavily on the bid-writing process. This is when the vital links between organisations and communities, financial planning, and a unifying set of goals between all stakeholders are established. It often occurs over many months, but the foundations of the bid can take years to develop. For example, cities often decide to bid after several years of steady investment and the development of strategic partnerships in their cultural sector. The bid writing process represents a coming together of local government, cross-sector organisations, independent creators, and local resident communities. These relationships are crucial for creating a sustainable cultural plan that is capable of delivering benefits for years to come and irrespective of the competition's outcome.

The bid for UK City of Culture must include the following:²

- A strong and unique vision for the city that uses culture and heritage to bring people together and inspire local pride
- Details of investment in culture and creativity, to support sustained local inclusive growth
- Plans that are in line with the government's levelling up agenda, improving pride-in-place and making the city somewhere people want to work and live in
- Innovative and creative event plans

- National and international collaborations with organisations
- A partnership between local government, cultural organisations, independent creators and local residential communities
- Plans on how to continue growth beyond the title year
- The development of strategic partnerships with local communities and organisations that will enable diverse individuals to be included and empower residents to shape the bid programme.
- Increase access to cultural venues to new groups of people

As this list shows, many aspects of what makes a good bid are focused on partnerships between residents and organisations. Furthermore, all are directed towards broader cultural goals that exceed the title of City of Culture. For example, encouraging cities to align their bids with the levelling up agenda feeds into wider national government initiatives. Similarly, empowering marginalised communities to have a voice in cultural planning is a goal that is not limited to the City of Culture agenda.

Our conversations with Volunteering Cities Fund recipients revealed interesting insights about the actual bid writing process. In one location, for example, we learnt how a freelance consultant wrote the bid by listening to and synthesising all the different visions of the various partners involved. This approach was adopted due to some disagreement between some of the partners, who had different visions and timescales for the project but had a shared vision for their place. Another location took the same approach, directing a consultant who had experience writing bids to take charge. They did this to gain the expertise of someone with direct experience of working on a successful bid. Employing freelancers and independent consultants is a common approach for City of Culture bids more generally. In contrast, the same partners who developed another location's cultural strategic plan wrote their City of Culture bid. This is because the opportunity for the bid came at the same time that the culture strategy was in development, and was seen as an opportunity to develop and deepen the strategy. These examples demonstrate that there are multiple approaches when it comes to actually writing the bid, and that each different approach can be justified from the unique context each bidding city is in.

1.2 Ingredients for success

Below, we explore three key ingredients for a successful bid and bidding process. These are partnership, inclusion, and long-term investment. These emerged as the three most salient themes from our desk research, and this hypothesis was corroborated by the conversations we had with Volunteering Cities grantees. When strategic partnerships between local government and organisations are nurtured, local communities are included throughout the bidding process, and the bid committee focuses on long-term strategies for the cultural sector, the delivered bid is more likely to produce benefits, regardless of the competition outcome.

1.2.1 Partnership

As stated above, one of the key goals of the City of Culture bids is to forge partnerships. The literature suggests that there are three types of partnership that must be utilised in the bidding process. These are:

- Partnerships between council organisations
- Partnerships between governance and creative organisations
- Partnerships between governance and community/resident groups

Evidence from previous bidding cities suggests that this first kind of partnership is often the most common and straightforward partnership to achieve. Following the 2013 UKCoC competition, the UKRI funded the establishment of a network between the three runners up - Birmingham, Sheffield and Norwich. These cities constitute the CCRN - the Cultural Cities Research Network. These cities were invited to share their experiences of the bidding process and share insights on how the process impacted them. All three cities reported that the strongest connections to come out of the bidding process were between different governance organisations (such as local authorities and council-based cultural departments) and those directly involved in cultural planning and delivery. For example, the Norwich Cultural Communities Consortium was established following their 2008 bid to be European Capital of Culture.³

In addition, the cities reported increased connection between different council departments, fostering a greater understanding of the value of culture across the council. Paula Murray from Brighton and Hove City Council argues that cities must be well-connected from a governance point of view for “the bid to have any degree of credibility”.⁴ Thus, establishing governance connections is a hugely important aspect of what makes a successful bid.

Cities that make it to the final rounds of the competition also establish strong partnerships with cultural organisations in their city, building collaborative relationships. However, these partnerships are at risk of quickly breaking down if there is not sufficient investment in them (see section 1.2.3).⁵ Many cities that experience significant benefit following a bid, formalise the informal partnerships forged during the bidding process. An excellent example of this is the Newcastle-Gateshead Cultural Venues (NGCV) network. The NGCV is a voluntary partnership of 10 cultural organisations. It was built following a decade of informal collaboration between the chief executives of the organisations. Since 2009, the NGCV has involved a more structured, formal collaboration. The partnership works together to invest in infrastructure, skills and talent, to develop ways to engage new audiences, and connect the sector to wider innovation.⁶ Newcastle-Gateshead lost the bid to be European Capital of Culture 2008, yet is widely referred to as a model for how a bid can bring about significant economic benefit, regardless of competition outcome.⁷ The ability to formalise vast networks of cultural organisations is part of what makes Newcastle-Gateshead such a success story.

Rather than forge new partnerships and then formalise them, other successful bids take advantage of pre-established formal networks during their bidding process. For example, Stirling wrote their bid to be UKCoC 2025 in partnership with Scene Stirling Place Partnership Project, “a collaborative initiative by the city’s arts and cultural partners”.⁸ Scene Stirling was established in 2018 and includes participatory arts charities, orchestras, art centres, museums, galleries, and university spaces. The ability to harness existing cultural infrastructure is an important aspect of what makes a city likely to benefit from second place funding, a point we explore in detail in Section 1.2.3.

One of the key findings of the EHRC CCRN report was that the final kind of partnership - between the main bidding partners and local communities - was the hardest to achieve. In fact, all three cities in the CCRN reported limited success in making these connections; “the extent to which different residential, non-professionally associated communities became connected by the bidding process, or even remotely involved, is less evident” than the partnerships made within the council.⁹ Richards and Marques note how vital public partnerships are for a successful bid by drawing on the case of BrabantStad’s bid to be ECoC 2018. Rather than enthusiasm for the bid growing over time, support actually declined, as did residents’ willingness to take part in the programme.¹⁰ As this example shows, failure to engage community partners inhibits the bid from achieving several of its main aims, including supporting sustained local growth and bettering pride-in-place.

In contrast to the CCRN cities’ limited success, Galway and Coventry (two previous UKCoC title cities) made public partnerships a central focus of their bid plans. Galway developed a cultural inclusion toolkit as part of its bid, and set up the ‘crosstown traffic’ initiative, in which community representatives trained members of the cultural sector on how best to reach members of their community, both to get them involved and to help recruit them to be volunteers. Other partnership-building methods include the development of a community hub – a centrally located community centre which hosts daily meetings with residents. In their bid document, Galway boasted an online community of over 70,000 people whose insights were used to shape the final bid, many of whom went on to be volunteers. Similarly, Coventry focused on an “asset-based, partnership driven approach” to “build the social capacity, social power and infrastructure of its people” during its CoC title year.¹¹ Establishing partnerships is closely related to another key ingredient for a successful bid – inclusion – which we explore in the following section.

Volunteering fund recipient partnership experiences of PARTNERSHIPS

All recipients of Spirit volunteer funding have partnered with other organisations to deliver their goals.

Partnerships include a mix of local council cultural departments and independent cultural organisations. Some recipients found it challenging to engage community-based cultural organisations, and some attributed this challenge to the fact that they had to make their applications quickly due to a close deadline between CoC 2025 and the Spirit of 2012 funding. When resources for writing the bid were limited, extensive engagement with community stakeholders was usually the first thing to go.

Despite nurturing partnerships formed during the CoC bidding process, many recipients experience lots of staff turnover which can make partnership maintenance hard. Some of the leadership may step down, which will be a challenge for the City team, for whom the organisation is a key partner. Similarly, in another location, one member noted how the bidding team dispersed after they won the bid and they are now hiring a new delivery team. Furthermore, Councils have changed the structure of their VCFE support, leading to the creation of new roles and removal of others.

When we asked grantees about what they considered the ideal bidding partnership to be, some interesting points emerged:

All noted that “collaboration” between partners from across the public, private and third sector were all important, while recognised that the partnership shouldn’t be “too big as to be unwieldy”

While one group member noted the importance of engaging grassroots community groups in the bid partnership, another noted that when it comes to community engagement, partners need to be aware of “what you can achieve within current resources”, suggesting that there is a limit to partnering with community groups. All noted the importance of higher level political buy-in from the council and strong political leadership, to direct and anchor the bid writing and delivery partnership team.

1.2.2 Inclusion

For a bid to kickstart regeneration and development, local residents must be empowered to take part. One way to do this is to partner with local communities, an essential strategy explored above. But developing a truly inclusive bid requires more steps to be taken. An inclusive bid is one in which all community members – especially those that are typically excluded from cultural spaces – are able to take part in the mega event's programme, and find opportunities to grow their own creativity.

One major barrier to a bid's success is the assumption by residents that the City of Culture title and bidding process is not for them, but rather is just for tourists. For instance, one volunteer for Liverpool ECoC 2008 shared that "I didn't feel much at the time [of the bid], felt it was more for visitors than locals."¹² Focusing on developing an inclusive programme mitigates this barrier, leading to a planned programme in which all wish to take part.

One strategy for achieving an inclusive bid is partnership and co-creation. Richards & Marques, 2015 note how "In some cases, such as Umeå (ECOC in 2014), instilling the idea of co-creation with citizens from the bidding phase onwards was an essential factor for the success of the ECOC (Åkerlund & Müller, 2012)."¹³ This strategy has been explored above in the context of partnering with local creative communities in designing scheduled programmes, but the bidding committee should also co-design the overall programme goals, methods, approaches and ethos with citizens to ensure inclusivity. The recent More Than A Movement Pledge offers an illuminating example of how inclusivity in the cultural sector is fostered through working with members of groups traditionally marginalised in cultural spaces. This pledge is "the West Midlands Arts sector's promise to take radical, bold and immediate action, to dismantle the systems that have for too long kept Black artists and creatives from achieving their potential in the arts and cultural industries".¹⁴ Organisations who sign up to the pledge commit to reviewing every aspect of their programme, from hiring structures to what events they put on. The recent Coventry Cultural Policy and Evaluation Summit included discussions of this pledge in their segment on how cultural mega-events (such

as UKCoC) can help dismantle racial inequalities.¹⁵ Committing to pledges like this during the bid helps to create a bid that empowers communities to take part and benefit from cultural development, helping to achieve sustained and local growth as a result of the bidding process.

Bids can also bolster their inclusivity by planning events in a way that delivers programmes directly to harder-to-reach and culturally excluded communities. Galway's 2020 bid for UKCoC demonstrates this strategy in an ambitious way. The bid includes an "artist in every place" initiative, with plans to include an artist from every part of Galway in the year programme. Furthermore, the bid plans to host at least 50% of all events in the rural parts of the city.

Volunteering fund recipient partnership experiences of INCLUSION

At the Volunteering Cities Fund grantee workshop, all groups were able to share tips and insights on how they manage to include communities in their day-to-day work. One team suggested to others that they should begin "networking informally locally - going to local GPs and having conversations". Another highlighted their engagement with "Service delivery partners - connecting with e.g. meals on wheels / mobile library / MH services / schools". When we asked the grantees where they felt like pioneers in volunteer development, one participant replied "in targeting specific groups e.g. ESOL students, refugees and SA, people with disabilities, people living with high deprivation, younger people".

Despite this commitment to inclusion, all cities struggled to include these diverse communities in the actual bid planning process, as the previous section demonstrates. This suggests that there is an implicit assumption that the community engagement will come even if the bid is not inclusive of communities. Evidence from our literature review suggests that this is not the case and inclusion needs to be invested in from the beginning of the bid development process.

1.2.3 Long-term investment

Birmingham has lost out on being UKCoC twice. Reflecting on this loss, Brian Woods-Scawen, chairman of the bid team, said “I think we did begin to capture people’s imaginations ... in the last few months. But we didn’t have something we could point to that would generate public interest in the way the national stadium campaign did. We only had a bid document and a set of proposals and people do not necessarily get excited by such things”.¹⁶

There are several things to unpack here. One point is the recognition that the public were not as well engaged in the bid as they ought to have been. A second point is a lack of understanding on how the bid related to other cultural agendas - “we only had a bid document and a set of proposals”. This relates to an important obstacle that Birmingham (and other CCRN cities) experienced, which is a significant drop in momentum following losing the competition. This is a common theme experienced across bidding cities.¹⁷ Momentum loss prevents a bid from producing economic and social benefits, regardless of competition outcome. Thus, a bidding process that is designed to keep momentum up is essential for a successful bid.

Situating a bid in broader, longer-term cultural investments is an effective antidote to lost momentum following a competition loss. Newcastle-Gateshead is the archetype for this strategy – their bid for ECoC was designed such that the majority of the programme remained actionable, even without the ECoC title. This was due to Newcastle investing in its cultural development in the years preceding the bid. Far from losing momentum following the competition outcome, Newcastle hosted its own mega event – Culture10 – and has continued to lead the UK in its cultural city planning. Galway exemplifies a similar approach – Galway created a ‘matched-funding’ model in their bid, in which the council would support the programme alongside the UKCoC committee, rather than the programme being entirely dependent on the UKCoC title. Long-term financial investment in culture prior to bidding is becoming increasingly important, as costs for bidding rise and the funding associated with the title becomes more uncertain. The UKCoC committee cannot currently guarantee national funding to the winning city.¹⁸

Losing momentum also puts the strategic partnerships forged during the bid at risk. For example, the three cities in the 2013 CCRN reported how quickly the partnerships fell apart after the results of the competition were published. Again, situating the bid in longer term cultural investments protects the partnerships from breakdown. For this reason, Stirling's approach of partnering with a pre-established formal network of creative organisations (see section 1.2.1) is more likely to lead to success than cities who forge partnerships for the sake of the bid only. Equally, encouraging a broad range of cultural governance organisations to sign up to pledges like More Than A Movement helps to ensure partnerships do not exist solely to support a bid, and therefore become redundant once that bid has been lost.

Volunteering fund recipient partnership experiences for LONG TERM INVESTMENT

For some recipients, both the Spirit of 2012 funding and the calls for CoC 2025 came at the perfect time since they were already in the middle of reshaping their cultural strategy. One location has recently developed a new cultural strategy whose goal is to lead economic regeneration. This strategy was presented to the previous local government and a mandate was put out to achieve it. However, despite being able to situate the bid in broader cultural strategies, it is struggling to action the plan due to changes within the council. Leadership has changed since the cultural strategy was written and the council's funding has fallen. This could explain why "it has been difficult to maintain momentum since the [city of culture] bid was lost", despite having the right ingredients for success. The team is trying to combat this by having regular, weekly meetings with their partners.

So far, this practice of meeting regularly has proven successful, and having these meetings is a great way to ensure effective communication between all partners, so that genuine collaboration can continue and bid delivery is enabled. The mandate to achieve the cultural strategy has no doubt provided a key motivation to maintain these regular meetings, despite the current troubles within the council.

In the group meetings, it was clear that all participants recognised the importance of long-term investment in cultural plans. This was shown through many suggestions about the importance of higher-level council buy-in and constant conversations about resource management.

To summarise this section, creating a successful bid requires many components. These include the establishment of sustainable strategic partnerships, creating an inclusive event schedule, and situating the bid in longer term cultural planning investments. All three of these are necessary for a bid to lead to social, economic and cultural benefits, regardless of a competition outcome. All of these need to be in place, independent of what funding the city has received to implement its planned schedule. Consequently, whether second place funding will be successful depends heavily on the extent to which these components are already achieved by the city. When it comes to deciding who should be given second-place funding, funders should consider strong partnerships, inclusion of communities and long-term strategic investment as indicators of success.



2. What is a 'good' volunteer infrastructure?

2.1 Introduction to volunteering and volunteer infrastructure

The goals of a city mega-events volunteer programme could include:

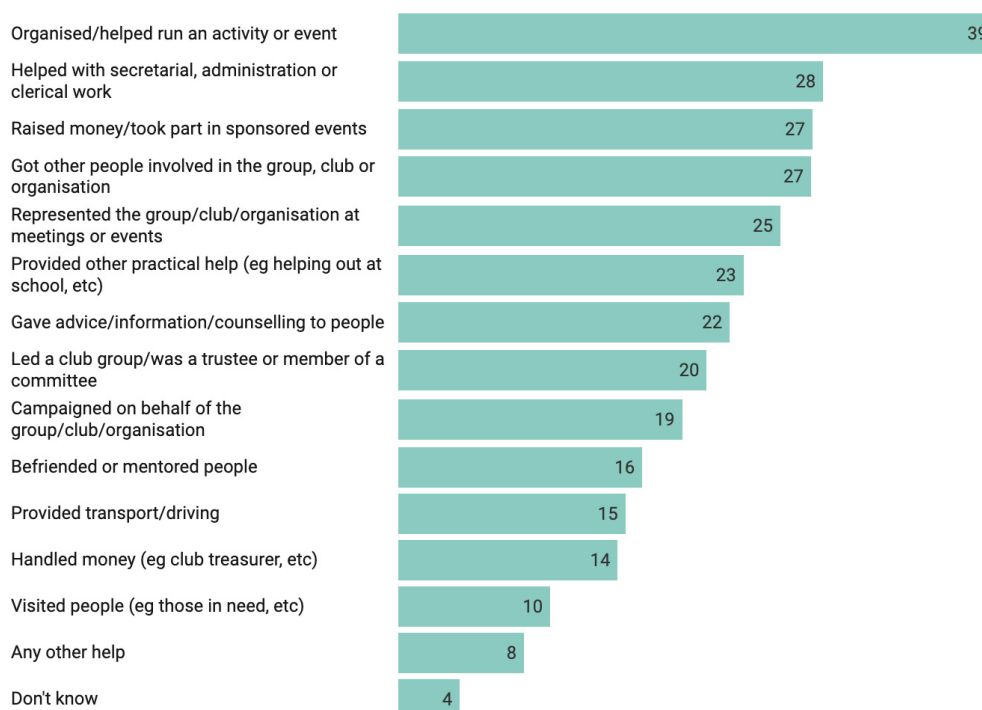
- Engaging local people in cultural activities
- Offer opportunities for up-skilling
- Spread engagement with city events across the region by increasing and diversifying the people who volunteer

Their roles include but are not limited to:

- Welcoming and directing tourists
- Helping organise and deliver events
- Develop projects

As this data from NCVO shows, these activities associated with CoC events are some of the most common things which people volunteer for more generally in the UK:

Activities of recent volunteers, 2018 (%)



The NCVO's data gives a good impression of what is going on with UK volunteering. 16.3m people volunteered in the year 2020/21, and more than a quarter of the population were regularly involved in informal volunteering (i.e. giving time to others but not as part of a formal organisation). Furthermore, over half of recent volunteers gave time to multiple organisations; two thirds of all volunteers gave their time to civil society organisations.

It is the job of a CoC bid to outline how this huge workforce will be put to the best use in their programming, how more people can be included in volunteering, and how the community of volunteers can be sustained once the title year is over.

2.2 Ingredients for success

In this section of the report, we describe three key features that we consider necessary for a volunteer infrastructure to be sustainable. These are: **a good managerial structure, resources for sustaining the volunteer network, and an emphasis on diversity and inclusion.**

All three of these are necessary both for a bid to use volunteers in the best possible way to achieve their planned schedule, and for the bidding process to lead to sustained development, regardless of the competition outcome and after the title year is over. Importantly, having a well funded volunteer sector is not a replacement for achieving these three goals. Even a well-funded volunteer community can suffer from a lack of diversity and inclusion, causing a high attrition rate and reduced sustainability. Furthermore, failure to properly manage and sustain volunteer networks can lead them to breakdown, regardless of funding. That being said, optimally achieving all three requires time, effort, and, of course, funding. Network sustaining and investing in diversity and inclusion particularly requires dedicated staff members and regular time and attention paid to volunteer groups. Thus, we argue that funding is best spent when it is used to support a city in achieving a volunteer infrastructure that has these three properties.

2.2.1 Managerial structures

Liverpool was named Europe's Capital of Culture for 2008 and has since been seen as an archetype of how to bid for cultural titles. Reflecting on the volunteers' experience, Dr Beatriz Garcia wrote a large report in which she interviewed numerous participants and gathered key insights.¹⁹ The report uncovers how successful Liverpool's volunteer programme was for enhancing the cultural lives of its participants, how connected volunteers felt after their participation, and how volunteers' perceptions about their city were transformed during the experience. However, in terms of the volunteer infrastructure, participants highlighted numerous challenges. One of the main concerns raised was the organisation's ineffective communication with the volunteer staff. This meant that volunteers felt underutilised. In fact, feeling underutilised was the most common issue that volunteers reported. There was also a lack of understanding of how much volunteer expending was available.

The problem with communication is just one example of how Liverpool ECoC's volunteers were non-optimally managed. Once the title year was over, many volunteers wanted to remain active volunteers for city events. However, volunteers and the CoC team were uncertain about who should take over responsibility for the group. While the volunteers felt that it was the council's responsibility to take them over, the council was unsure on whether the volunteers should have a say in cultural planning. This was a significant block that stunted the continuation of the volunteer programme after the title year.

Another problem experienced by Liverpool was how to adapt previous management models to the new task of delivering a year-long cultural programme. The early recruitment and management plan was based on previous single events – like sporting competitions. The team quickly learned that this had to change for the ECoC year.

Richards and Palmer discuss the importance of good volunteer management in their book *Eventful Cities*. They note how human resource planning is required to assess resource needs for individual events and across the whole programme. This requires the bidding committee to hire a full time team of

volunteer supporters. This is where funding becomes crucial. Another management strategy is to appoint volunteers whose job it is to relay information between different departments and volunteers. This helps volunteers to have a positive and efficient experience, allowing them to achieve their goals and therefore be more likely to volunteer again.

In short, a good managerial structure for volunteers is important for at least two reasons:

- It enables volunteers to get the most out of their time, creating more positive attitudes towards volunteering
- It increases the sustainability of the volunteer network over time, especially when the title year is over.

A good managerial structure will include strategies for how management will change once the city of culture programme is over.

Volunteering fund recipient partnership experiences for MANAGERIAL STRUCTURES

Most of the Volunteering Cities fund grantees was to use the grant money to improve the management of their volunteers. One team described their vision for a centrally managed site in which volunteers would be able to see all opportunities across sectors in the city. They shared how the National Trust already had a system like this in place. The issue that the team had encountered was that many organisations had their own team of volunteers, such as the botanical gardens or the galleries, but they failed to join up their volunteers so that others could benefit. When asked about what they would change about their volunteering infrastructure, they mentioned they would want an “Effective single point of access for all volunteering that can include monitoring requirements”.

Another team expressed a similar desire to join up all the volunteer management teams across the area. In more rural areas, this is seen as a particular challenge.

A grantee team noted how many Mutual Aid groups sprung up over Covid, and volunteering in the city has boomed since. The pandemic changed the Council's relationship with their local volunteers; before 2020, one organisation was left to manage volunteers on their own, whereas now there is much more joining up. However, the team still expressed desires to improve the training offered to volunteers and ways of including them in a range of activities.

In fact, improving the training, support and flexibility offered to volunteers was mentioned by all teams. Many recognised that this could only happen with better volunteer management. One team stated that they wanted "to give volunteers accredited training/ skills pathways". Despite this common desire, there were few new ideas on how to do this to reflect current needs of people wanting to volunteer and organisations needing a diverse volunteer resource base.

2.2.2 Sustaining volunteer networks

Despite finishing its reign as UKCoC in 2017, Hull's "blue-coated army of volunteers"²⁰ remains a strong presence in the city. Volunteers have continued to be recruited and they work on year-round cultural events, such as Pride Parades. This is an excellent example of how volunteer infrastructure created by the UKCoC bid can be sustained and support cultural development long after the title year is over. One explanation for how Hull achieved this relates back to the importance of managerial structures, described above. Hull 2017, the company created to run the City of Culture year, transformed into a "permanent independent arts organisation under the new name of Culture Company".²¹ Culture Company is responsible for the recruitment and management of the blue-coat volunteers. Through this effective management strategy, and with help from funding such as from Spirit of 2012, Hull's CoC volunteer infrastructure and network was able to outlive the title year.

Another effective strategy for sustaining volunteer networks is to utilise pre-existing volunteer infrastructures to deliver the CoC programme. This strategy was employed by Galway who developed a strategic partnership with the two

largest volunteer structures in Galway; Galway Volunteer Centre and the ACTIVE programme. Like Hull, Galway's CoC volunteers continue to work at cultural sites under the Wave Makers Programme - the organisation set up to recruit and manage the CoC volunteers.

However, a potential downside to using pre-existing volunteer networks is it could limit the extent to which new volunteers from different areas and social groups are included in the CoC events. Bids must work on how these networks can be used and yet how recruitment can still be transformed and elevated to increase inclusivity.

Recall Galway's ambitions to host half of its programme in rural areas. Not only does this deliver cultural programmes to an audience that perhaps does not get to access cultural events as much as urban-dwellers, but it also has benefits for the inclusivity and sustainability of the programme's volunteering. Data from the community life survey suggests that those living in rural areas show higher participation in volunteers than those in urban areas (24% versus 16%). Thus, if many events occur in rural spaces, and people living in these spaces already make up a high percentage of formal volunteers, then the volunteers for these events are likely to be local, serving two goals of including people who do not have as much access to cultural sites as others and yet are an important, pre-existing part of the formal volunteering workforce.

Volunteering fund recipient partnership experiences for SUSTAINING VOLUNTEER NETWORKS

A common ambition raised by all grantee teams was to make volunteering a normalised behaviour, that people wanted to do as it was easy, flexible, inspiring. It seems that in one location residents are rewarded for their community volunteering hours through local discounts. They can track their activity on the linked app and find new volunteering opportunities.

Another grantee is working closely with the Council for Voluntary Action, a nation-wide organisation that has recently celebrated its 25th anniversary. Voluntary organisations can join and become part of a network of volunteers, rather than focusing on one 'type' of volunteering.

2.2.3 Emphasising diversity and inclusion

As emphasised in section 1.2.2, a good bid is one which is as inclusive as possible. The same goes for volunteer infrastructures. Data from the community life survey suggests that 23% of formal volunteers are from Black diverse heritage groups, 14% are from Asian diverse heritage groups, and 18% are from White heritage groups. This covers all kinds of formal volunteering, from the cultural sector through to homelessness support and food banks. There is also evidence to suggest that participation from White groups is decreasing, while participation is increasing in other groups. However, it remains the case that the vast majority of volunteers are from least deprived backgrounds.²² Liverpool '08 has been referred to as the year in which a focus on inclusivity was created, as Liverpool proudly recruited a diverse group of volunteers, with some non-White ethnic groups being over-represented in the volunteer workforce.²³ Despite these positive numbers, evidence from the NCVO and Dr Helen Timbrell indicate that volunteer spaces are still often unwelcoming spaces to many people. One of the main goals of the CoC programme is to include more people in cultural activities to level up the region and kickstart economic regeneration – having a large and local volunteer force is an excellent way to do this. However, if some groups are failing to be recruited or retained due to a lack of focus on diversity and inclusion, some groups risk being disincluded from the potential benefits of the bid.

Timbrell's report set out to uncover if ethnicity is a factor in the volunteering experience and found that it was – volunteer experience seems to be dependent on what ethnicity the volunteer is.²⁴ Both the NCVO's²⁵ and Dr Timbrell's reports note how people from diverse heritage communities experience a range of microaggressions and racism when on duty from fellow volunteers, organisational staff and members of the public. Timbrell's report looked at volunteers from organisations across different sectors, such as English Heritage and Macmillan Cancer Support. She found similar experiences across these organisations. Each report produced a set of similar recommendations as well, with both emphasising how recruitment processes need to change if organisations are serious about making their volunteering more inclusive. More specifically, both emphasised a need for organisations to work with local communities and build trust with them. Equally, both argued that EDI messaging needs to be visible from the management of a volunteer

more inclusive. More specifically, both emphasised a need for organisations to work with local communities and build trust with them. Equally, both argued that EDI messaging needs to be visible from the management of a volunteer community. Both also referenced the need for better EDI training – Timbrell noted how very few volunteers recalled ever receiving EDI training. Other recommendations include the need to establish flexible roles so people with different requirements can take part.

Creating opportunities for people with disabilities or chronic health conditions to volunteer is also necessary for a diverse and inclusive volunteering community. A recent report by Volunteering Matters illustrates how those who are likely to experience the most health benefits from volunteering are unfortunately the most likely to be excluded.²⁶ Health benefits include a reduction in isolation, better exercise, socialisation, and volunteering in health spaces helps to improve the delivery of healthcare services. The report offers several recommendations, such as adopting a “locally driven strategic approach to volunteering”, and encourages mapping and promoting volunteering opportunities in an area. Both of these recommendations require better centrally managed volunteering.

One way to bolster the inclusivity of a city’s volunteer programme is to tap into the vast network of so-called informal volunteers. These are people who give their time and efforts to help others but not as part of a formal organisation. Evidence from the community life survey shows that over 50% of people were involved in informal volunteering every year since 2013, with this figure rising over lockdown.

Since informal volunteering takes place at the scale of neighbourhoods, streets, blocks and communities, harnessing the power of these hyper-local connections could engage a wide range of residents in the City of Culture plans. An excellent example of how local and informal connections can be used in city-wide initiatives is the Bradford Citizen Coin scheme. Citizens can earn coins by “involving yourself in local projects around your area”.²⁷ These coins then give residents access to local discounts from participating retailers. The purpose of the scheme is to “make the social value of the local community

visible whilst supporting local retailers”.²⁸ Volunteer infrastructure plans that could harness the power of informal volunteering could reach wider communities and instigate a bidding plan that is highly place-based.

Volunteering fund recipient partnership experiences for EMPHASISING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

All recipients have exciting and ambitious plans to increase the diversity and inclusion of their volunteering infrastructure using the Spirit grant. Importantly, all have reimagined the role of volunteering in order to achieve their diversity and inclusion goals.

For example, two locations are using language to make volunteering more inclusive: “Our main access issue is language, rather than physical disability. A huge proportion of our population are ethnic minority, with most being South Asian. For this reason, we are partnering with (organisations) to provide written and oral translations for all our volunteers and visitors to our cultural centres.” - A member of a city Partnership

“Our main goal is to give residents the power over how they want to present their own city. Incorporating their language more into our tourist and cultural sector is therefore hugely important to us – the language is a great source of pride for locals” - A member of another city Partnership

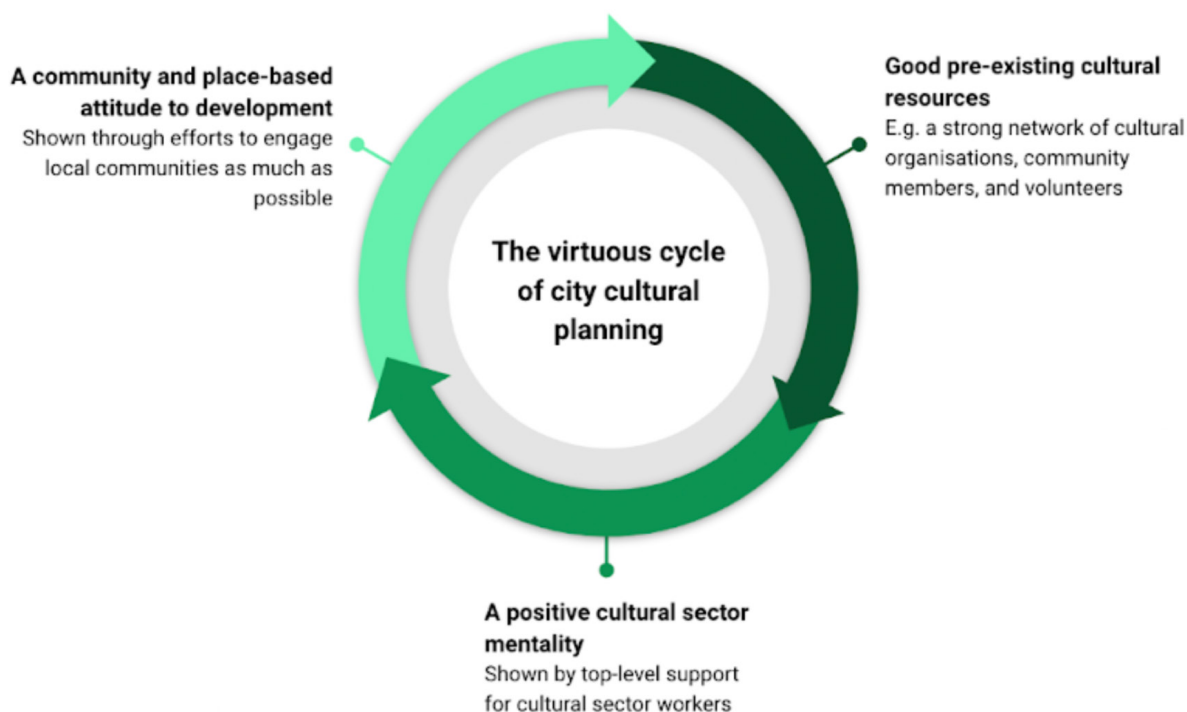
As these quotes suggest, who each city wanted to focus on was different. For one, their main goal is to make volunteering more accessible for people living with disabilities and chronic health conditions. For another it is to make volunteering more multicultural to reflect their ethnically diverse city. Meanwhile, another grantee’s bid focuses on using volunteering as a vehicle for addressing and combating health inequalities, while the final grantee has a focus on engaging younger people.

These differences highlight how increasing ‘diversity and inclusion’ is a blanket term for a wide set of very different goals and aspirations that will most likely need specific approaches. However, all share the common theme of making volunteering more representative of residents and communities.

To summarise this section, good volunteer infrastructure is sustainable, inclusive, and allows volunteers to reach their full potential. Volunteers must have clear and sustainable management, and cities must plan for how volunteer networks can be kept up after the title year. Despite evidence suggesting that participation from groups traditionally excluded from cultural spaces is improving, recent reports show that cultural volunteering is still a hostile place for many. A lack of inclusivity harms volunteer infrastructure by leading to high attrition rates, and preventing the bid from bolstering cultural development and economic regeneration for all.

3. The virtuous cycle

The remainder of this report focuses on how a bidding city can achieve a successful bid and a good volunteer infrastructure. It is hopefully becoming clear that much of what is required for one is also necessary for the other. For example, connecting and partnering with local communities and residents is necessary for both. Additionally, taking advantage of existing cultural resources is an effective strategy for both a sustainable volunteer infrastructure and for a bid whose success does not depend on winning a cultural title. This is to say, if a city can achieve some key goals, then it is likely that they will achieve both a successful bid and a good volunteer infrastructure. The virtuous cycle model describes and explains what these key goals are:



3.1 Birmingham, Sheffield and Norwich

As mentioned in the introduction, cities need all three of the listed goals for coming from behind funding to be successful. Looking at what happened in Sheffield, Birmingham and Norwich following their unsuccessful 2013 UKCoC bids shows why this is the case. As the AHRC CCRN project reports, all three cities had a positive cultural sector mentality and good pre-existing cultural resources. All 3 successfully embedded the bid writing process in broader city cultural planning, an important feature of a successful bid explored in section 1.2.3. For example, in Birmingham, the bid added value for projects and programmes already in development.²⁹ Each city also had good pre-existing cultural resources, in terms of the relationships between different council departments and cultural communities; in Sheffield, “the bid became a common cause between Sheffield’s City Council and cultural sector, who began to work collaboratively with a shared objective to acknowledge and promote the city’s cultural strengths”.³⁰ Additionally, all three had a positive cultural sector mentality, using the UKCoC as a “powerful catalyst”, encouraging cities to “think more strategically about their cultural offer, identity, and heritage within a national context and in comparison to other drivers”.³¹ One of Norwich’s main reasons for bidding was to enhance their cultural sector mentality, to create a greater sense of civic pride with a strong artistic lead from the city’s cultural sector. However, as mentioned above, all felt a serious momentum loss following the outcome of the competition, stunting economic and cultural regeneration. So, what went wrong?

From the perspective of the virtuous cycle, all three looked relatively strong in two out of three of the key goals. However, none successfully engaged local communities, meaning they did not have a community and place-based attitude to development (see section 1.2.1). In turn, this severely limited the cultural resources available for the bid-writing-process, since few partnerships with community-based creative spaces were made. This meant that, although the bidding team had a positive cultural sector mentality, local residents did not (see quote in section 1.2.3).

3.2 Hull

As mentioned above, Hull has been able to maintain its volunteer infrastructure long after its year as City of Culture 2017. It was able to do this partly because of support from Spirit of 2012, but this funding would not have been successful if Hull wasn't already in a position where they could achieve the other necessary ingredients for success. Looking at Hull 2017's strategic business plans shows how it achieved all three goals in the virtuous cycle.³²

3.2.1 A community and place-based attitude

Hull 2017 invested heavily in partnerships within the education sector. This served numerous purposes:

- Helped to deliver cultural upskilling across young people by organising events and teaching programmes in local schools. This helped to create a legacy of cultural and economic development for the next generation
- Since schools are important communal spaces for communities, Hull's plans to locate many of its events in education spaces increased the accessibility of its plans
- Consulting with young people on what culture means to them to help make the bid as relevant to them as possible.

This clearly supports the goals of creating partnerships with local communities and residents, situating the bid in longer term strategies for cultural and economic development following the bid, and helping to make the cultural plans accessible to as many people as possible.

Other place-based initiatives include:

- Mentoring local organisations who want to be part of the programme
- Using local supply chains wherever possible
- Establishing cultural ambassadors: individuals within schools and communities who feel empowered to talk about the city's cultural offers with their neighbours, colleagues and classmates

With respect to Hull 2017's volunteer infrastructure, recruitment particularly focused on making volunteering accessible and attractive to Hull's priority families and young adults not in employment, education or training. This required a heavily local recruitment initiative, to identify these individuals and establish volunteer roles that they could easily access and commit to. Furthermore, the volunteer programme focused on providing residents involved with CPD opportunities. Not only was diversity and inclusivity bolstered through this initiative, but volunteering was able to become more sustainable as local people were upskilled.

3.2.2 Good pre-existing cultural resources

For both a successful bid and good volunteer infrastructure, it is important that a city utilises pre-existing cultural resources and establishes partnerships to develop these further. Hull partnered with pre-existing volunteer infrastructure, such as the University Union, but also was conscious of expanding and developing these networks further. In addition, Hull planned to take as much advantage as possible of existing spaces in the bid, investing in improving these if necessary. For instance, Hull planned to host many events within school spaces (mentioned above), as well as utilising and extending the fruit market, Pearson Park, and Hull New Theatre amongst other sites.

To prevent partnerships breaking down after 2017 and cultural resources being lost, Hull had plans within the bid for what would happen to the partnerships following the title year. For instance, they planned to transfer partnerships and insights gained from engagement with the education sector to strategic arts organisations "to ensure momentum is maintained throughout 2017 and beyond" (p.23). As explored in section 1, sustaining partnerships is key for bids to lead to success in a city, regardless of competition outcome.

The fact that Hull invested heavily in its community and place-based strategy meant that it was well positioned to utilise local cultural resources. One of the bid's plans was to inspire and mentor local artists. Combined with plans to maintain this network of local creators, Hull put itself in an excellent position to produce continued cultural and economic growth. This point also

emphasises how the different aspects of the virtuous cycle feed into one another.

3.2.3 A positive cultural sector mentality

One of the bid's main goals was to promote health and wellbeing through arts and culture. As a result, the bidding process was aligned with the city's Hull 2020 health vision. This emphasises the way culture was perceived by the bidding team: as an opportunity to improve the lives of their residents in an extremely important way. Since Hull recognised the detrimental effects of social isolation on health and wellbeing, the volunteer recruitment and overall bidding strategy focused on creating inclusive work for communities, so that the bid could achieve its health (rather than merely cultural) outcomes. The bid was also used as a springboard for the City Council's 5 year cultural strategy plan.

Hull's emphasis on young people and the history of the region indicate both its recognition of its past culture and the importance of investing in its future. Unlike Birmingham, the inclusion of residents and especially school aged children meant that residents had much more than just a bid to look towards. This positive mentality of culture and its ability to upskill young people and support health and wellbeing prevented momentum drop over the bidding period, and is undoubtedly one of the reasons why Hull continues to see benefit today. Furthermore, in prioritising young people, the Hull bid has a built-in strategy for increasing the longevity of its investment in volunteer infrastructures; especially given that most volunteers are currently older people, re-focusing volunteering around younger people sets Hull up for a long future of volunteering residents.

Again, one can see how different aspects of the virtuous cycle reinforce and feed into one another here. Through empowering young people, Hull was more capable of spreading the positive cultural mentality it had, helping to improve health and wellbeing through the power of culture and art. Equally, due to this strong belief in the role culture plays in society, Hull invested heavily in extensive partnerships and ways to sustain those connections. In turn these partnerships helped to deliver a place-based programme and help residents to experience the benefits of the bid.

4. Conclusion: Recommendations for second place funding

4.1 Overview

Comparing and contrasting the experience and outcome of bidding in Hull and the CCRN cities shows that winning the title and receiving financial support from Spirit of 2012 was far from the only explanation for why Hull saw so much more success than the others. Hull was much better set up to benefit than the others because they had succeeded in achieving the virtuous cycle of city cultural development. This is important to keep in mind when assessing a city for coming-from-behind funding – a city must already be in a very good position to benefit from this kind of funding.

Other funding models will be more appropriate for cities who are yet to achieve the virtuous cycle. For example, funding allocated towards helping Birmingham, Norwich and Sheffield reach residents and local communities during the bid writing process would probably have been more likely to lead to a successful bid and volunteer infrastructure than second place funding.

In essence, then, funders must look towards the specific cultural context of each city when deciding where to allocate funding, keeping in mind the large number of necessary conditions that must already be in place for second place funding to lead to beneficial outcomes. As a rule-of-thumb, when a bidding city has achieved the virtuous cycle, coming-from-behind funding is likely to be successful.

4.2 Recommendations

Here are a list of recommendations for both bidding cities and their potential funders that can help bidding cities get the most out of second-place funding:

		For Bidding Cities	For Second-Place Funders
For developing a successful bid	Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Engage with the community from the start of the bid-writing process -Partner with youth boards to get the voice of young people -Host regular meetings, online if possible, to make them more accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Make evidence of partnership nurturing a reporting requirement -Incorporate a community engagement strategy as a requirement in the funding application
	Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Have a dedicated marketing team to share the bid and calls for community consultations widely -Have and build relationships with diverse communities so that inclusion is genuinely baked in from the beginning -Tap into online communities to get regular feedback -Be guided by survey data collected by local 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Prioritise applications in which a clear demonstration of how the perspectives and needs of different communities have been incorporated into the bid plans -Prioritise applications that have a vision for how inclusion will be sustained so there is an inclusive legacy from this funding -Have a best practice framework so organisations know what they need to do

		VCFSE organisations on what their residents want	-Have people on hand to help and support with this - links to other cities who have done this well.
	Long-term investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work actively to engage councillors with the work to demonstrate the value of the bid and sustaining commitment -Integrate the bid with other long term city strategies -Adopt a joined-up approach with the council's cultural team -Incorporate young people into the plans for the bid as much as possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Host regular group reflection sessions with grantees to share insight on how to engage council to invest long term -Disseminate best practices for integrating the bid into long term city planning
For developing a good volunteer infrastructure	Developing managerial structures and Sustaining volunteer networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a centrally managed online system of volunteering opportunities in an area and to connect volunteers -Offer volunteers rewards and recognition for their volunteering experience, such as job references from volunteer managers -Invest in a range of different training opportunities for people of different abilities and time commitments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Share examples of novel uses of online spaces to centrally manage volunteer opportunities and volunteers -incorporate evidence of volunteer management as a requirement for reporting outcomes

		<p>Offer credentials for the training done.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Develop online and in-person volunteer spaces for connecting on an informal level -Hire a team of volunteer managers at the beginning of the bid-writing process, to find new volunteers and create networks for retaining them throughout the bidding process -Unite volunteers with a shared team name 	
	Diversity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ensure equal representation of different genders, races, ethnicities, and abilities from the top level of the bidding partners right the way through to volunteer managers. -Co-design volunteer offer with representatives from different cultural communities -Make D&I training a requirement for all volunteers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set D&I benchmarks as requirement for funding -Host group workshops on how to best incorporate volunteers from different backgrounds and how to cultivate a warm and inclusive atmosphere for them

5. References

1. The virtuous circle of cultural planning is a term coined by Neighbourly Lab. Our arguments about how the virtuous circle contributes to successful second place funding are, as far as we are aware, original, and have emerged from our detailed desk research and conversations with Spirit of 2012 Volunteering Fund grantees.
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11. <https://warwick.ac.uk/wie/warwickengages/ahrcpolicysummit/>. Please note that this point is not intended to offer a position on the current state of Coventry City of Culture Trust, but is merely intended to point out how partnerships with community organisations are present to differing extents in City of Culture bids.
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Using innovation to increase
social connection

