



CoCA RESOURCE:

TOP TIPS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS FOR CERAMIC MAKERS AND ORGANISATIONS



York Art Gallery

York Museums Trust

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CoCA RESOURCE: TOP TIPS FOR COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS FOR CERAMIC MAKERS AND ORGANISATIONS

Who is this resource for?

- 1 Ceramic artists and makers who are interested to explore the opportunities and benefits of collaboration.
 - 2 Organisations and individuals interested to work collaboratively with ceramic artists.
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How will this resource help you?

The resource is designed to help you consider:

- The types of collaboration possible.
- The benefits of collaborating.
- How to find and develop the right collaborative opportunity.
- How to maximise the impact and reach of a collaboration.

The information presented reflects the presentations and ideas shared at the **CoCA Restating Clay Symposium: Ceramics Communities**, hosted by Cardiff School of Art and Design on 25 September 2019. Films of presentations and discussions that took place at the event can be viewed on the [CoCA website](#).

A collaboration, like any form of partnership, will be successful if it meets the needs and expectations of all participants.

Before embarking on a collaboration, be sure it is the right one for you.

Collaboration can take many forms

Including:

- Residencies e.g. [V&A Ceramics Residencies](#) or [Crown Works Pottery Residencies](#).
 - Fellowships e.g. [Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowships](#) or [Stanley Picker Fellowships](#).
 - Temporary and long-term cooperative groups e.g. [Haptic/Tacit](#) or [Collective Matter](#).
 - Temporary and long-term partnerships or collectives e.g. [Clayground Collective](#) or [Whitegold](#).
 - Commissions for festivals e.g. [Whitegold Commissions](#) or [British Ceramics Biennial Commissions](#).
 - Commissions for museums and galleries e.g. [Matt Smith for the Fitzwilliam Museum](#) or [Michael Eden for National Museums Scotland](#).
 - Exhibitions; any good exhibition is a successful collaboration between the artist(s) and the hosting organisation e.g. [Sara Radstone](#) at CoCA, York Art Gallery.
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Working collaboratively can have many benefits for ceramic artists, and those organisations and individuals interested in working with them

Benefits include:

- The power to achieve more together.
- Bringing together complementary and diverse experience and knowledge.
- Eligibility for funding that supports collaborative projects.
- Sharing of costs.
- Peer to peer learning.
- Professional development and personal growth.
- Opportunities for greater professional recognition.
- Exposure to new and diverse ideas and perspectives.
- The opportunity to attract more attention, leading to the exposure of the work, maker(s) and / or organisation, including the generation of press-worthy stories.
- Opportunities to be challenged within a supportive environment and to obtain constructive feedback.
- Access to historic and contemporary objects for inspiration and exhibition.
- Access to making facilities or studio and / or materials.
- Creation of new work for, and new knowledge about, public collections.

And much more...

Selecting or creating an effective collaboration

To select or create an effective collaboration, you first you need to ask...

- **What am I looking to achieve?**
- **Which of the benefits of collaboration listed above meet my personal and / or career objectives?**

When you have thought about answers to these questions, you can then start to explore which opportunities might help you achieve your objectives.

Keep in mind that the person(s) or organisation you collaborate with will have their own objectives; it is important that they are aligned or mutually compatible with your own.

When you are considering potential opportunities, ensure you check the eligibility criteria. It might specify that you must be a certain age or point in your career, or that you come from a specific country or region etc.

If there is not an existing programme or activity that provides the type of collaborative opportunity you are looking for, you may wish to consider developing your own project and inviting others to join you in realising it. It is important to keep in mind the pros and cons of self-initiated projects versus hosted ones. A self-initiated collaboration is likely to require more administration and self-motivation than one which is hosted.

The success of a self-initiated collaboration may be assisted through engagement of a mentor or mentees, and it is important to consider how you will find complementary expertise and experience with your collaborator(s).

As with any complex project involving partners, it is useful to take and share notes of all discussions throughout the process to refer to later. It may also be appropriate to initiate a process for taking and distributing meeting minutes to the project team.

Sources of information about collaborative opportunities

A simple Google search will present a range of opportunities, including residencies, fellowships, commissioning projects and exhibitions. You are also likely to find them advertised locally and by national and international organisations, including:

- [Arts Council News and Jobs Updates](#)
- [Crafts Council Opportunities](#)
- [a_n Jobs and Opportunities](#)
- [Craft Potter's Association e-bulletin](#)
- [NCECA Opportunities](#)
- [Communications from your regional Pottery Associations](#)
- [World Crafts Council Europe Opportunities](#)
- [Contemporary Studio Ceramics Subject Specialist Network \(CoCA\)](#)

If you identify an organisation or group you would particularly like to work with, sign-up to receive information from them and / or make direct contact.

Being sure it is the right hosted collaborative opportunity

In the process of applying for an opportunity, or developing your own idea, it is important to keep considering whether it suits your objectives.

If you have any questions about an advertised opportunity, always contact those involved. This can save you making an inappropriate application, will enable you to express your interest and potentially gain insight into what will make a more successful / impactful application.

Being sure it is the right self-initiated collaborative project

When developing your own collaborative project, it can be helpful to look at the details, approach and evaluation for programmes run by others. This will assist you in framing and planning your idea in the most successful manner.

Once you have an idea, and know who you would like to collaborate with, get together – face-to-face if possible – to talk through the scope of the project. Good communication is essential, and it is important to determine that you will be able to successfully work together. Make sure you take detailed notes.

Your conversation should be used to clearly define:

- The nature of the collaboration you are committing to developing.
- The timescale for the collaboration.
- The roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders and individuals involved.
- The outcome(s) you are looking to achieve.
- How success is gauged.

Depending on the nature of the collaboration, it can also be useful / essential to discuss:

- Health and safety.
 - Equal opportunities.
 - Safeguarding.
 - Insurance.
 - Confidentiality.
 - Data protection.
 - Intellectual property.
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Maximising the impact and reach of a collaboration

When you are establishing your project, consider how you might share and disseminate the activity being undertaken, as it starts, progresses, and is evaluated.

It is especially important to discuss and agree how you will acknowledge the other partners and / or funders. Appropriate crediting and acknowledgement are likely to be a requirement of receiving funding. It will be easier to maintain a positive relationship with your partners if all parties get this right.

At the core of good communication is storytelling. Consider what will make a good story when communicating. People often connect most readily with specific rather than general information.

It is useful to ask yourself the following questions when communicating:

As the project starts:

- Who will the collaboration benefit? – Organisations and individuals? Professionals and the public? Specific communities or demographics?
- Why is the project exciting?
- What is new or different about the project?
- What new / additional funding is the project generating?

As the project progresses:

- The activities and interventions that relate to certain communities or may be considered examples of socially engaged practice.
- New ways of seeing that the collaboration is facilitating.
- New ideas or knowledge the project has generated.

As the project is evaluated:

- Who has the collaboration benefited and how? Organisations and individuals? Professionals and the public? Specific communities or demographics?
- What was created?
- What you have learnt?
- What you would do differently another time?
- What will be the project's legacy?
- How will you build on the project in the future?
- What plans do you have for the future of this type / area of work?
- How you plan to share the results of the collaboration and the associated learnings?

We have many more tools at our disposal to achieve this today, but when you are in the throes of an activity it is easy to forget to record or photograph it, and / or ask people for their feedback.

Collaborators are going to like you more if you remember to acknowledge them and share information and assets resulting from the collaboration. As projects grow, make sure everyone is aware of the requirements for this.

Collecting and disseminating information about the collaboration will help to engage others and raise its profile. It will also provide source material to put forward when you are bidding for funding and developing future projects and applications.

For inspiration watch the presentations and ideas shared at the **CoCA Restating Clay Symposium: Ceramics Communities**, hosted by Cardiff School of Art and Design on 25 September 2019. Films of presentations and discussions that took place at the event can be viewed on the [CoCA website](#).

Also see **CoCA Resource: Top Tips for Reinterpreting and Reimagining Ceramic Collections** for useful information and links, if you are looking for examples of the wide range of imaginative ways to collaborate.