Toolkit

Introduction

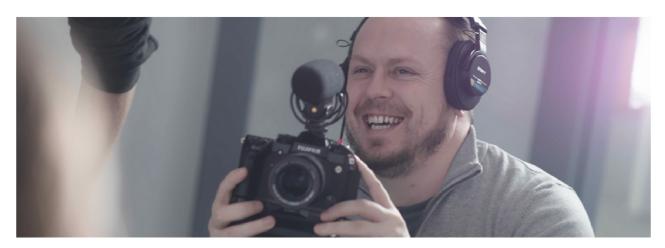
Travellers Times is a publication that challenges negative stereotypes and bias against Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities in the UK's mainstream media. This bias, driven by a lack of representation from ethnic minorities in the UK press, fosters racist perspectives within wider society. Journalism, media, and communications are often not considered career options within these communities because of mistrust and resistance to social cohesion.

Community feedback showed that making Travellers Times a sustainable, community-owned and operated platform and publication was the most important issue to its readership and audience. To achieve this, we developed an 18-month training and development program to support community members in accessing and utilising journalism and media, and to support the editorial and operational development of an independent Travellers Times.

Five-step guide to building participation

We spent a year building the TT Vision project, a meaningful part-time education and training course. This required research, consultation, and collaboration. We are sharing our process, journey, and outcomes to support other organisations in developing their own programs to engage communities and support individual development.

In this toolkit is our **five-step guide** to building your own community-based creative participation training and skills programme:



Step 1: Do Community Research and Consultation



Travellers Times and Rural Media have been working with and championing Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller issues for over 25 years, which gave us a clear understanding of the issues that allowed us to craft an iterative research-centred approach that informed and drove TT Vision, both in creation and delivery. This was born out of years of direct community consultation, research and information gathering in the field. That extensive database of lived experience and practical insight was instrumental in creating a framework that worked for the target group, not least gaining their buy-in and establishing their ownership of the program. Knowing the communities the program is going to serve is essential. The Gypsy, Roma Traveller communities, for example, struggle with data access, childcare and quiet or private spaces in which to work, so these needs had to be assessed and planned for carefully. Each community, group, organisation and individual will be different.

Key Points:

- Remember that one size does not fit all
- Consult with the people, communities and organisations that your program is aiming to help
- Really listen
- Know your community, participants and their cultural contexts
- Combine traditional research with on-the-ground fact gathering
- Plan to meet each community/group's needs
- Don't rush page 2

Step 2: Select an Educational Framework



When developing a program involving education, training or building new skills, the right learning framework is vital to successfully achieving your goals. Frameworks to consider include:

Constructivism

A learning theory based on learners actively constructing their own understanding/knowledge of the world through experiences and reflection. It emphasizes the learner as an active participant in the learning process.

Andragogy

A theory of adult learning that emphasizes adults taking responsibility for their learning. It assumes that adults are self-directed, bring life experiences to learning, are ready to learn, and are motivated to learn by internal factors.

Microlearning

Microlearning is a learning approach that delivers content in small, focused chunks. It is designed to be easily digestible, accessible, and often used in elearning and mobile learning environments.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A framework that accommodates individual learning differences to provide flexibility in how information is presented, how students respond or demonstrate knowledge and skills, and how students are engaged in learning.

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Blended Learning

Combines face-to-face classroom methods with online learning activities. It integrates technology, such as online courses, collaboration tools, and other digital resources, with traditional classroom teaching.

Key Points:

These learning frameworks can be used individually or in combination to create effective and engaging learning experiences tailored to the needs of the learners and the goals of the educational program. We chose Andragogy as our primary mode because we work with a diverse group of adults who brought varying experiences, wanted to understand what they were learning and to take ownership of their learning process.

Andragogy = Adult learners with ownership of their own learning

- Working with adults
- Respecting lived experience
- Ownership of learning process
- Community of Inquiry = Community Centred Learning







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Step 3: Create a Practical and Industry-Facing Project



We supported people to enter creative industries by focusing projects on building portfolios, bringing in industry professionals for specialist sessions, creating content for external publications and Travellers Times, and providing industry contact through portfolio reviews, mentors, and work placements. TTV participants took on support roles and worked as freelance photojournalists and journalists throughout the training program, ensuring proactive summative learning-by-doing.

Key Points:

- Meaningfully support participants into industry
- Projects focused on building Portfolio
- Industry Professionals deliver specialist sessions
- Create content for real-world platforms/outlets
- Industry Contact Portfolio Review, Mentors & RM Placements.
- Participants adopt meaningful support Roles
- Participants working as "freelancers" for the program during training
- Work with new formats in response to audience and participant feedback

Step 4: Take an Accessible, Adaptable and Culturally Aware Approach



The program was built to be flexible around the needs of Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities. We provided paid training, represented these communities through commissioned contributors, industry experts, and positive media examples, built community-centred training resources, critically reviewed wider resources, provided pastoral support, dedicated technical support, and managed online program resources. We really had to think about our pastoral duty of care and any sensitivities about the mental load of learning. Also, it quickly became clear that there can be a 'heavy responsibility' of being seen as the 'voice of a community', which can come with online hate/discrimination/abuse. Robust policies, procedures, mental health support and boundary setting are key to success and good health of participants.

Key Points:

- Program built to be flexible around participant needs
- Paid training to allow engagement without financial disadvantage
- Inclusive representation in commissioned contributors, industry experts and positive media examples
- Build community centred training resources
- Wider resources critically reviewed by participants
- Pastoral Support Team ensure a meaningful participant experience
- Be aware of the "mental load" of learning
- Ensure a sense of shared program and participant responsibility
- Dedicated technical support available to participants

- Online Program Management of Third-party training resources
- No Gatekeeper = all aspects of delivery within and outside the program is open and transparent
- Use a Free-for-Participants Digital Learning Platform
- Put in place robust policies and process
- Set clear, respectful boundaries that reflect professional work environments

Step 5: Include Co-production and Ongoing Consultation



We built flexibility into program modules and briefs, allowing participants to respond using their skillsets. We used an individualized approach to learning through goal setting and benchmarking in partnership with participants, conducted regular program reviews, let participants define their own success goals, and drove iterative evaluation through self-assessment, peer review, and tutor feedback. The group was consulted on story and narrative development for the magazine and website, and an editorial group included TTV participants for training and authentic perspectives. In-person days were held to build the group and consult about the direction of development for *Travellers Times*.

Key Points:

Flexible Program Modules and briefs

- Individualized approach to learning with individual goal setting and bench marking
- Regular, meaningful program reviews
- Participant-defined goals for success
- Evaluation by Self-Assessment, Peer Review and Tutor feedback
- Development led by group involvement
- Include participants in planning for training and lived experience perspectives
- In-person days to build group dynamics and peer support
- Establish the program as a safe space to talk and express opinions
- Be transparent
- Be kind

