

Creating a Collaboration Rider



A collaboration rider is a way of explaining your working style and where you are coming from so that institutions know how to care for you better.

Imagine if you were someone else—a curator, producer or facilitator—who was about to start on a project with you, but who doesn't know you. What should that person know about your working style or expectations?

This guidance sheet covers 4 areas that could go into a Collaboration Rider:

1. Access needs
2. Availability of personal energy
3. Trauma triggers
4. Personal values and ethics
5. Cultural considerations

This isn't an exhaustive list and you could include more areas not covered here, or indeed ignore areas that aren't relevant to you.

Accessibility needs

Access needs are different for everyone. But here are some resources you can use to identify your own access needs and then to write out your own rider.

In this UK civil service blog, accessibility is understood as when “people are not excluded from using something on the basis of experiencing a disability.” Click here to read more: <https://accessibility.blog.gov.uk/2016/05/16/what-we-mean-when-we-talk-about-accessibility-2/>

Unlimited, a disability arts organisation, has guidance here on how to create your own access rider and links also to other organisational resources: <https://weareunlimited.org.uk/resource/creating-your-own-access-rider/>

Shape Arts has an example of an access rider here:

<https://www.shapearts.org.uk/news/access-docs-for-artists-resource>

Availability of emotional/mental/physical energy

When do you think that you are most or least energetic?

Try this for a week.

Observe yourself at the end of each day and fill in the table below with “Lots”, “Medium”, “Little”. Is there a pattern? Repeat this for another week or more, and see if there is a consistent pattern.

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri
Morning					
Afternoon					
Evening					
Night					

If there is a pattern, decide what work is best allocated to what parts of your pattern, e.g., meetings in the morning, or admin tasks at end of the week, or training/reading in evenings.

What about your energies on longer cycles of time: monthly, quarterly or yearly.

- What parts of a month are you more or less energetic?
- Do seasons affect your energy? If so how? E.g., regular winter illness means to expect project and communications delays between Dec and Feb.
- Do you celebrate high days or religious festivals and what effect do those have on your energy before and after?

Are there other factors affecting your energy?

- Are you a primary carer for someone, e.g. a child/children, elderly relative, disabled friend/relative? How does that affect your energy and should you inform or remind the institution of when you have capacity and of your pace?
- Are you grieving?
- Are you preparing for or managing a major life time-consuming change, e.g., getting married, moving house, receiving a new person into your household (child/pet/parent)?

Consider your pattern of energy, or specific parts of it are worth sharing with the institution you are working with.

Trauma or triggers

We aren't born fresh at the start of each project. We bring good or bad experiences from past projects, and indeed from life in general into new projects. As such it may be worth understanding what might trigger you and what you think would be worth sharing with the partner you are working with.

What past negative or traumatic experiences that might be triggered by an upcoming project?

- Spend a few minutes visualising the **environment or building** in which the project will happen. Observe what thoughts, memories, feelings or body tensions/relaxations occur as you visualise the potential work environment or building. Write these down.
- Spend a few minutes visualising each **person** you will be working with in the project. Observe what thoughts, memories, feelings or body tensions/relaxations occur as you visualise the potential working relationship. Write these down.
- Spend a few minutes visualising **any other important aspect** of the project. Observe what thoughts, memories, feelings or body tensions/relaxations occur as you visualise these aspects. Write these down.
- Use the table below to review your observations.

What I am visualising	What thoughts, memories, feelings or body tensions arise	How would you normally <i>react</i> to these thoughts and feelings?	Ideally how would/should you <i>respond</i> to these thoughts and actions?	Is this private, or do you think it can be shared so that the institution can help you?

For the items that you feel able to share with the institution or your partners, write one or two sentences for each, explaining the situation/scenario and how you would like the institution to respond.

Collect these sentences together to add to your collaboration rider.

Handy Tip: If you can't think of any scenarios then use your current project to take note of traumatic reactions you might have and develop trauma-informed responses for your next project.

Watch this video about how you can ask to be treated with a trauma-informed approach:
<https://youtu.be/zg8ahtHIRxU?si=ohqQW2i7wy4pfdm9>

Values and ethics

For many artists and art workers, especially those who have socially engaged or community-centred practices, how an institution resonates with your values and ethics may be an important part of how you work.

Institutions will have values too which they will require you to comply with, e.g., anti-modern slavery policies, inclusivity and respect policies, environmental policies, etc. You too may have values that are central to the way you work, e.g., disability-led, anti-racist, anti-sexist, non-hierarchical, collaborative, etc.

Consider if it is worth summarising your values so that organisations know where you are coming from and work out how they can adapt to your values.

Note that there is no one way to determine your values, and your values may change over time too. But here are some questions that might help you start pinning down what values operate in your practice.

1. Think about one or more projects you have completed in the past, or are currently undertaking. Write down in post-it notes or bits of paper what about these projects:
 - a. Satisfied you most?
 - b. You were most proud of?
 - c. Made you angry or disappointed?
 - d. Inspired you to do the next thing?

Group similar items together into themes.

Summarise each theme into a sentence or two.

2. Find people whose opinion you trust. Ask them to tell you what they admire about or think is significant in:
 - a. Your practice.
 - b. How you relate to or work with people.
 - c. Your impact.
3. Consider the values that you desire having. Think about the people/things/symbols you admire most and write down why you admire them.

4. Review all the notes you have written so far from the above exercises, and see if you can summarise what you have discovered in 3 or 4 sentences. This could be the start of a values statement which you may want to include into your collaboration rider.

My own collaboration rider is linked below and it is a work in progress as my needs change all the time, and what I learnt about myself increases too in time. So I will be amending this over time. And as such, I don't include the full rider in my contracts but may ask/require institutions to refer to it.

<https://jackkytan.github.io/#Collaboration%20Rider>

Cultural Considerations

Are there cultural or religious considerations to consider?

Are there cultural differences between you and the organisation that you should both be aware of. For example:

- In your culture, nodding and smiling does not necessarily mean that you agree to something. It may just mean that you acknowledge what the other person is saying in a respectful and affirming way. However, the organisation you work with might think that you are agreeing.
- In some organisations, when someone says "That was great! Thanks!" at the end of say, a project evaluation meeting, this doesn't mean that the project was "great". It could simply mean that the organisation's cultural practice is to end the meetings on a positive note.
- In some cultures, disagreement is a form of respect.
- In some cultures, teasing or 'taking the piss' out of someone is a sign of fondness.

Are there cultural or religious practices you observe that requires space or dedicated time during your project:

- Are there dietary requirements?
- Do you need a private or quiet place for prayer times?
- Are there important festivals or observances that fall within your project timeline that you need to take time out for?