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Attendees at 8 Jan session (feel free to correct or change below):	Attendees at 12 Jan event (feel free to correct below)
Adam Kent	Adam & Parys / Trinity
Adam Fuller	Alex Sherman
Amanda Adams	Amanda Fawcett - Firebird Theatre
Annie Parker	Becca Gill (she/her) Radical Ritual (Becca Gill)
Caroline Anstey	Benoit- Peoples Republic of Stokes Croft
Clare, Watershed	Dr. Dana Lungu UoB & Cardiff (Dana)
Esther (they/them)	George Mann (he/him) - Ad Infinitum
Frances Macadam, Head of Arts Programme, University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust	Gill (she/her)
Harry Wilson (he/him)	Jack - Bricks/ St Annes House (Jack)
Heritage Programmes	Janet Tam (she/her) Something To Aim For
James McQuaid	Julz Davis
Jen Farmer	Kamina Walton
Jess - Rising Arts Agency (Rising Arts Agency)	Kate Arthurs (Kate)
Jonathan Harper	Katie Hudson
Laura Nicholls - National Trust Cotswolds	Layla Barron
Maca Gomez-Gutierrez	I-barlow
Naomi Miller, (she/her), Social Research Builders	Marta G.G-Blessings in Action CIC
Nicky Williams (BFI, Heritage Programmes)	Nancy Medina- Bristol Old Vic
Oliver de Rohan	Nicola Szymanska-King
Rebecca Dawson, BOV	Prof. Penny Hay, Bath Spa University, UK
Rhiannon Jones - Circus City	Ren (She / her)
Richard Headon	RikkiHenry
Simon Wales - Bristol Beacon	Roz Stewart-Hall
	Something To Aim For
	Trish.Brown
	Vic Harding, Museums Development South West

Intro to doc

This brings together reflections, ideas, questions and offers from people working creative and cultural sectors (listed above) in response to a preview of the Citizens' Cultural Plan; that will be fully published on 15 Jan. This is a **working doc** rather than a finished summary. Please feel free to edit, comment, add etc.

How to use the doc

Following the session on 8 Jan, Naomi suggested, in a follow-up email, to organise ideas around:

1. what is already happening to celebrate and share
2. where there's a seed of something to develop and grow
3. when something new needs to be created or built

We have run with this for the structure for this doc. We have summarised this as [Share](#) / [Grow](#) / [Build](#)

You are invited to:

- 1) add comments to the [Share](#) / [Grow](#) / [Build](#) sections of the doc with clarifications or reflections
- 2) feel free to add to or respond to specific points - perhaps use [coloured text](#)
- 3) we added a [final section](#) which is a place for suggestions for sessions between citizens, sector organisations and/or networks - to workshop the citizens' Cultural Plan - from Feb to May 2026
- 4) check out [what happens next](#)

SHARE

What's already happening that connects to the Citizens' Cultural Plan

(8th) Understanding experience, not just outputs - Watershed raised the importance of going beyond headline numbers to understand lived experience of systems like funding: *"Beyond numbers it would be GREAT to understand how good the experience of funding is for people from different lived experiences."* This was echoed by others asking whether qualitative, ongoing evaluation could sit alongside quantitative reporting.

(12th) Citizens' priorities align strongly with existing sector practice - several people reflected that the Citizens' Cultural Plan does not feel "out of step" with the sector, but instead articulates what many are already trying to do. One person noted there had been concern that citizen recommendations might feel unrealistic, but instead *"everything that's been put forward is probably stuff the sector would prioritise anyway."* This was described as reassuring and energising.

(8th) Ticketing and audience data already exists but isn't shared - Circus City highlighted that Headfirst, the Bristol-based ticket seller, *"holds a huge amount of data for smaller Bristol-based promoters"* that could help show growth in events and attendance, but that this data isn't currently used strategically at a regional level.

(12th) Marketing, visibility and directories as shared infrastructure - building on this, people working in museums and heritage noted that huge effort goes into programming, but that *"we often fall short on marketing and generating good engagement"* due to lack of capacity. There was interest in directories being audience-led rather than sector-led, and in better links with destination marketing organisations.

(8th) Shared workspace and resource models already exist - Watershed's Pervasive Media Studio and The Studio in Bath described working models based on shared space, informal exchange and mutual support: *"It's a skill exchange rather than having to pay for skill... and that seems to be working quite well."*

(12th) Small capital changes can unlock access and participation - Museum Development South West reflected that small-scale capital investment in buildings can be transformative: improving accessibility, enabling volunteering, and diversifying workforce — with physical space often being the real barrier rather than intent.

(8th) Strong place-based work is happening but not always visible - a collaboration between The Wardrobe Theatre (Bristol) and Weston-based artists led to a Christmas show in Weston-super-Mare that sold out for 10 weeks. This sparked reflection that organisations often don't know what's happening nearby: *"That was the first time I'd heard that had happened."*

(12th) Citizens were surprised by how much already exists locally - this echoed citizens' own responses during the Assembly, where they were *"gobsmacked"* by how much cultural activity was happening on their doorstep that they hadn't known about — strengthening the case for better connectivity rather than more provision.

(8th + 12th) Universities and FE already acting as civic partners - on the 8th, University of Bristol's WECA-funded skills work at MyWorld / The Sheds was highlighted. On the 12th people expanded this (including in follow up email) to include SPARKS Bristol, micro-campuses in Barton Hill and Hartcliffe & Withywood, widening participation work, and the Reparative Futures programme — all seen as opportunities to align existing institutional resources with citizens' priorities.

GROW

What's working and could be strengthened, shared or connected

(8th) Build on existing networks rather than creating new ones - people consistently stressed using what already exists, including What Next West (with an offer to host conversations), local authority culture boards, and place-based networks in North Somerset and South Gloucestershire.

(12th) Networks as delivery spaces, not just discussion spaces - this was developed further on the 12th, with people suggesting that these networks could host practical sessions to work through parts of the plan — helping avoid inertia and making the plan actionable rather than overwhelming.

(8th) Freelancer networks and routes in - Rising Arts Agency shared its model for *“mobilising freelancers & creating networks for opportunities.”* Freelancers highlighted the risk of exclusion: *“There is a big group of people... not necessarily connected to any larger organisation.”*

(12th) Leadership rotation and succession as sector-wide learning - Rising Arts Agency's rotating leadership model was raised again, alongside an important question: what happens to people stepping out of leadership roles, and how does the sector retain their knowledge and support them? This was framed as both an opportunity and a risk.

(8th) Bridging Bristol and surrounding areas - there was strong interest in better intelligence sharing between Bristol, Weston, Bath and rural areas — so organisations can direct artists, audiences and collaborators more effectively.

(12th) Alignment beats new money - several people argued that while large new funding pots are unlikely, *“we can get a long way with effective alignment of existing opportunities”* — particularly with Lottery funders who want evidence that communities prioritise investment.

(8th) Open-sourcing practice - people expressed interest in sharing models around workspace, skill exchange, training, and shared codes of practice (e.g. HR, volunteer management).

(12th) Shared skills directories as quick wins - Museum Development South West suggested that training directories, skills offers and event listings could be connected — creating consistency across sectors and making existing opportunities easier to find.

BUILD

What feels missing or needs developing next

(8th + 12th) A shared way of tracking progress and success - across both sessions, people wanted ways to combine numbers with lived experience, transparency with storytelling. Questions included: *"Is there a way of feeding everybody's data into one central place?"* and *"How do we know when we're being successful — how do we feel it?"*

(8th + 12th) A simple, shared 'matrix' for collaboration - building on the Mayor's suggestion, there was appetite for a matrix that shows:

- what's already happening
- who is committing to what
- where collaboration is needed
- what outcomes are emerging

People stressed this needs to be *"really simple"*.

(12th) Risk of scale and inertia - several people warned that the ambition of the plan could feel paralysing if everything is treated as equally urgent. There was strong support for prioritising *"low-hanging fruit"* and sequencing work across short, medium and long term.

(8th + 12th) Education and national constraints - people welcomed the priority of embedding creativity in schools but raised systemic barriers, including national curriculum pressures and academy chains. Suggestions included using the citizens' mandate to apply pressure nationally and targeting specific academies strategically.

(8th) Climate justice and environmental sustainability - people wanted to ensure environmental justice isn't sidelined: *"I'd hate for it to be a payoff between human justice and environmental justice."*

(12th) Culture's role beyond the 'culture bubble' - there was a strong call to take the plan into other sectors — transport, health, education, economic development — so it doesn't remain *"kept within a creative bubble."*

(8th + 12th) Storytelling, imagination and advocacy - James McQuaid asked whether there's room for a *"what if"* narrative to bring the plan to life. Others echoed the need to retain *"real human voices"* and avoid translating citizen language into strategy-speak.

(8th + 12th) Citizens staying involved - people welcomed the Citizens' Oversight Panel and the idea of a Feb–May roadshow, seeing this as critical to preventing the plan becoming *"a document that's handed over and forgotten."* There was strong support for citizens continuing to speak directly with the sector.

Ideas for sector groups or network to workshop plan with citizens from Feb to May

Ideas for network or organisation to host workshop session with citizens on plan	Month/Date
North Somerset network - linked to North Somerset leaders network	Apr session
Freelancers network session - explore role between practitioners and the plan	?
What Next West - Caroline Anstey; echoed by Kate on 12th	Mar?
Museum & Heritage networks (via Museum Development South West)	Mar/Apr?
Independent producer networks - Rising Arts Agency as a convenor / model / Open calls for independent producers (Becca Gill)	
Arts & Health / Wellbeing networks - North Somerset CPP	Apr/May?
Universities as civic convenors (University of Bristol, Bath Spa) - Micro-campuses (Barton Hill, Hartcliffe & Withywood) / Reparative Futures programme	
West of England Cultural Compact	Feb?
Creative Industries / Growth Fund-connected networks	
Cultural Summit	April/May
Can this be presented to Bristol BID colleagues and businesses please?	
Events and Festival-@ REM (Ben Hardy)	Feb/March ?

What happens next

While this document will continue to grow, we will need to create a framework that's more visual for people to review and input. As was said in the meeting on 8 Jan "It might be good for there to be a mechanism / standardise how you want to receive this info, otherwise I imagine it could be loads of stuff to sort through."

A further preview session with another group will take place on **Mon 12 Jan**, and reflections from that conversation will be added to what's here.

Together, these early sessions will help shape a **Feb to May period of dialogue** around the Citizens' Cultural Plan, involving citizens and the sector through meetings, workshops and networked conversations across the region.

The intention is that together we create shared spaces that help us collectively reflect on the plan, identify opportunities for collaboration, and begin to understand how the citizens' priorities can be taken forward in practice and make a case for inward investment and strengthen our collaboration as a sector.

In partnership with Culture West, the MCA is planning a Cultural Summit to be held in April/May time (date dependant on our Mayor's availability) to undertake the following:

- Collectively explore and agree as a region how we will deliver on the priorities of the Citizens Cultural Plan – what's ready to go, what is planned in the future and what is still aspirational (Share/Grow/Build)
- Begin to identify resources, capacity and partnerships needed to support delivery
- Celebrate and raise awareness and recognition of the successful impact of Culture West, showcasing it as an exemplar model of how we can work collaboratively to deliver shared priorities around culture
- Gain support from key stakeholders and funders to support planned and future cultural activity
- Provide a networking opportunity for the region's cultural sector