

Review of Collaboration & Co-Production Fund

Warwick Institute of Engagement

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Introduction

Overview

Across its first five years, the Collaboration and Co-Production Fund has supported 64 distinct projects.

The evidence suggests that relatively modest awards have created space for academics and external partners to experiment, establish relationships and develop approaches to co-production which, in a significant number of cases, have continued well beyond the original funding period.

The strongest evidence of impact is therefore not simply the volume of activity generated during the funded year. It is the trajectory created by the initial investment: relationships continuing, approaches being repeated or adapted, further resources being secured, changes being made to academic and partner practice, and some activity becoming embedded within Warwick's education and engagement infrastructure.

This short review has been commissioned by Warwick Institute of Engagement to provide an independent overview of the Collaboration & Co-Production Fund and, in particular, to understand what the portfolio reveals about impact, legacy and the development of collaborative practice.

Rather than simply restating what individual projects have delivered, the review brings together the available evidence to identify the patterns that emerge across the Fund as a whole: what the funding has enabled, what has continued beyond the initial award and where there is evidence of wider value for communities, partners and the University. The intention is to provide an evidence-based account that is robust but also practical and accessible, and which can inform both future evaluation and the way in which the Fund's story is communicated internally and externally.

The review draws upon:

- Project application information relating to 64 distinct funded projects
- Summary reports on funded project developments and successes
- Annual reports on the progress of the Fund from the Director of WIE

Taken together, these different sources provide a useful longitudinal picture of the Fund: not simply what projects delivered at the point of funding, but what happened subsequently and what the initial investment appears to have set in motion.

Evolution of the Fund

Summary

- Relatively small awards have supported substantial and varied collaborative engagement, with outcomes extending beyond activity and participation.
- Across successive cohorts, many collaborations have continued beyond the original funded activity and developed further.
- Longitudinal reporting increasingly demonstrates longer-term impact, including further activity and additional internal and external funding.
- The portfolio has developed to 64 distinct projects, maintaining breadth across faculties, disciplines, communities and types of partner.
- Repeat involvement by academics, departments and external organisations suggests a developing capability for collaboration and co-production.
- The Fund creates multiple pathways to longer-term value, from trust building and new ways of working through to continued activity, scaling, embedding and wider legacy.

From individual projects to sustained collaborative practice

The earlier projects established many of the characteristics that remain visible across the Fund: Warwick academics and students working with community and cultural organisations, artists and groups whose experiences and voices can be less visible within conventional university research and engagement.

Project reporting shows that relatively small awards have supported substantial and varied engagement involving Warwick staff, students, partner organisations, artists and wider communities. More importantly, the outcomes extend well beyond activity and participation figures, including new methods of engagement, changes to research, new resources, curriculum development, amplification of seldom-heard voices and stronger university-community relationships.

There were also early indications that many of these would not remain isolated projects. Across the portfolio, partnerships frequently expected their relationships to continue and a number moved quickly towards further collaborative activity and funding opportunities.

This pattern is reinforced across the wider portfolio. Projects have produced resources for schools, arts and community organisations; generated exhibitions and creative work; contributed to policy and practice; influenced curricula and teaching; and developed new approaches to engagement. In many cases, collaborations have continued, been repeated or developed into more ambitious activity.

Increasing evidence of longer-term impact

As the Fund has matured, longitudinal reporting has made it possible to see what happens after an award ends. Across the more established projects, a substantial proportion of relationships have continued, with collaborations also securing further external and internal funding and developing new activity.

The same pattern is visible across successive cohorts. Follow-up reporting consistently shows that most responding projects maintain some form of collaborative relationship beyond the original funded activity, although the strength and nature of that continuation varies.

More recent projects provide further evidence of this pattern, with reporting showing continuing relationships and, in some cases, collaborations already widening to include additional organisations.

The most recent projects extend the portfolio to 64 distinct projects overall and maintain its breadth across faculties, disciplines, communities and types of partner.

Developing collaborative capability

A further feature becomes apparent when the 64 projects are considered collectively. A number of academics, departments and external organisations appear across the portfolio more than once. This continued engagement appears to reflect a developing capability for collaboration: academics and partners build experience through one project and subsequently undertake deeper, broader or different forms of co-production.

Project reporting also points to changes in the way awardees approach co-design, inclusion and public engagement. This suggests that the value of the Fund extends beyond the immediate outcomes of individual projects. It can also be seen in the relationships, experience and collaborative capability that remain after the funded activity has ended.

An emerging trajectory of impact

Taken across the portfolio, the evidence suggests a broad trajectory through which relatively small awards can generate longer-term value:

Initial collaboration



Experimentation and trust building



New knowledge, resources and ways of working



Continued activity and stronger relationships



Further funding, scaling or embedding



Institutional or community legacy

Not every project follows this trajectory; some generate significant value through intensive engagement with relatively small communities without subsequently scaling or attracting further funding. The important finding is that the Fund creates multiple pathways to longer-term value, much of which only becomes visible after the original funded activity has finished.

Key patterns of impact and legacy

Summary

- Sustained relationships are the clearest recurring indicator of legacy, with collaborations continuing and, in stronger cases, developing into new activity.
- The Fund can act as seed funding and proof of concept, helping collaborations generate evidence and secure further resources.
- Projects have created knowledge, resources and creative outputs that persist beyond the original funded activity.
- There is evidence of lasting changes in academic, partner and organisational practice, including approaches to co-production and public engagement.
- Some collaborations have become embedded within education and institutional provision, extending impact beyond individual award holders.
- Community outcomes include confidence, well-being, belonging, skills and practical benefits, alongside greater ownership and amplification of seldom-heard voices.

Sustained relationships

The clearest recurring indicator of legacy is the continuation of relationships between Warwick and its collaborators. Some collaborations have developed considerably beyond the original funded activity, with particularly strong examples evident among the more established projects. These include 'Creative cultural connections to the history of St Vincent' (Kate Astbury - School of Modern Languages and Cultures), 'Regeneration' (Darius Koester - Warwick Medical School), and 'Memory Lane Cafe' (Kate Owen - Warwick Medical School).

Follow-up reporting shows that a substantial proportion of collaborations remain active after the original funding has ceased, with many also generating additional activity. The significance is not simply that partners remain in contact. In the stronger cases, the nature of the relationship changes: trust develops, partners undertake new activities together, additional organisations become involved and the original collaboration becomes a platform for subsequent work.

Seed funding and leverage

A second clear pattern is the role of the Fund as a proof-of-concept and leverage mechanism. The small initial award enables partners to test whether something works, establish a relationship and generate evidence. This can subsequently place them in a stronger position to secure further resources.

Across the more established projects there is clear evidence of leverage, with external awards, larger internal awards and further bids being secured or developed as a consequence of relationships and evidence generated through the initial activity.

The project 'Stitch in Time' (Margaret Low - Warwick Manufacturing Group) demonstrates this mechanism particularly clearly: the initial funding allowed the activity to become embedded within schools and generated evidence of value which strengthened the partnership's position when subsequent external funding became available.

Further funding should not become the primary definition of success – many valuable community collaborations will neither need nor attract another grant – but it is an important part of the programme’s return on its relatively modest initial investment.

New knowledge and resources

Across the 64 projects, there is a strong pattern of collaborations producing something that persists beyond the funded activity. This includes research and teaching resources, toolkits, websites, exhibitions, creative works, publications, professional networks, learning materials and permanent installations. Across the portfolio, these outputs have included touring creative work, major public exhibitions and resources that have contributed to lasting changes in policy and practice within partner organisations.

Some of these activities have subsequently achieved considerable reach. Examples include projects extending their work through festivals, conferences, workshops and online resources, major public exhibitions reaching substantial audiences, and permanent creative or educational installations on the Warwick campus.

These are important examples of resource legacy: something created through the original collaboration continues to generate value without requiring the original project to continue in its initial form.

Changes in practice

One of the Fund’s potentially most significant effects is also one of the least easily quantified: people and organisations change how they work. The evidence includes academics changing how they approach co-production and public engagement; teachers being enabled to take greater ownership of activity; artists and scientists developing new ways of working together; cultural organisations adopting new evaluation approaches; and Warwick Arts Centre changing aspects of its community engagement and creative learning practice.

The longitudinal evidence suggests these changes can persist. Year Three awardees describe refining how they work with teachers, placing greater emphasis on communication and adaptability with external partners, widening artistic collaboration within Life and Health Sciences, and continuing to refine co-production methods.

This represents a different form of legacy from an exhibition, publication or grant: the funded project leaves behind increased capability. Educational impact also becomes increasingly significant as projects mature. Across the portfolio, collaborations have contributed to undergraduate modules, teaching and mentoring approaches, research projects and doctoral development, with some activity becoming embedded within mainstream educational provision or receiving longer-term institutional support.

Educational and institutional embedding

These are particularly valuable outcomes because the impact has moved beyond the individual award holder. The collaboration has changed something within the institution itself and created a basis for continued activity beyond the original award.

Earlier projects contributed to undergraduate modules, teaching and mentoring approaches, research projects and doctoral development. The 2024–25 cohort contains particularly strong examples of activity becoming embedded. Community health-check activity has resulted in all second-year Warwick Medical School students – around 400 students each year – undertaking a placement day with an underserved community. Warwick Law School will permanently support the Early Action Benefits Advice Hub and expand student participation to 12 volunteers each year.

Community outcomes and lived experience

From the earliest cohort there is evidence of increased confidence, pride, well-being and belonging; amplification of seldom-heard voices; greater community ownership of research; and people who had never previously visited Warwick feeling welcomed onto campus. Later projects provide increasingly tangible examples.

These include improved language skills, confidence and employability; health checks for underserved communities; creative work tackling loneliness and social isolation; benefits advice generating significant financial gains for community members; and research with Black and South Asian women around experiences of menopause. The portfolio also maintains a strong emphasis on young people, refugee and migrant communities, health and lived experience, victims' perspectives and creative or community-based engagement.

Across the 64 projects there are five overlapping forms of legacy:

1. **Relationship legacy** – partners continue to work together.
2. **Knowledge/resource legacy** – something created through the project continues to be used, shared or experienced.
3. **Practice legacy** – academics, partners or participants change how they work.
4. **Institutional/community legacy** – activity becomes embedded within an organisation, curriculum, service or community.
5. **Trajectory/leverage legacy** – the initial project enables further funding, greater reach, new partnerships or more ambitious work.

Gaps and opportunities

Summary

- A consistent core of project review questions would strengthen comparison between cohorts and improve evidence of longer-term impact.
- Future follow-up should move beyond recording outputs towards understanding what happened subsequently, impact trajectories and the Fund's contribution.
- Evaluation should distinguish between reach and depth, recognising the different forms and intensity of engagement across projects.
- Further evaluation could explore whether the Fund is developing wider institutional capacity for co-production, while also identifying institutional barriers.

Strengthen consistency of longitudinal evidence

The decision to collect regular follow-up information has been extremely valuable: without it, some of the Fund's strongest impacts would simply not be visible. There are, however, inconsistencies across the reporting. Response rates vary and some questions have changed or have not been asked consistently, making comparison between cohorts more difficult than it could be. A consistent core of longitudinal questions would make future cohort comparison considerably stronger.

Move from outputs towards trajectories

The evidence is currently strongest around what projects did and produced. The next opportunity is to capture more systematically what happened subsequently. Future follow-up could focus particularly on:

- whether the original relationship remains active;
- what the partners have subsequently done together;
- whether resources or approaches continue to be used;
- what changed for the community or organisation;
- what changed in the academic's own practice;
- whether activity became embedded within Warwick or the partner organisation;
- additional resources or funding secured; and
- what would probably not have happened without the initial Fund award.

This would allow the evaluation to move from recording outputs towards understanding impact trajectories and contribution.

Quantify leverage

There is sufficient evidence of subsequent funding to justify producing a programme-level measure of financial leverage. This should distinguish between funding actually secured and bids still in development, and ideally between internal and external funding. It should not be presented as the Fund's principal measure of success, but it would answer an important question: what additional investment has been unlocked by the original awards?

Capture depth alongside reach

Participant and audience figures remain useful, but the Fund contains very different models of engagement. A project reaching a very large audience through an exhibition and a project involving 20–30 people in sustained co-production are doing different things. A future framework could therefore distinguish between: reach – how many people encountered the work – and depth – the extent to which people participated, influenced decisions, developed capability or experienced change. This would make comparison across the 64 projects considerably more meaningful.

Explore institutional capacity

The recurrence of academics, departments and partners across the portfolio creates an opportunity to investigate whether the Fund is developing a wider culture and capability for co-production at Warwick. This could include repeat applicants, progression to more ambitious collaborative activity, sharing methods with colleagues, changes to departmental practice, and the extent to which successful approaches become incorporated into teaching, research or engagement.

There are also institutional barriers that need to be captured. Awardee feedback indicates that University processes can sometimes make it difficult to spend funds or work flexibly with community partners, pointing to the value of clearer guidance for those undertaking public involvement, co-production and impact activity. This is important learning. The evaluation should identify what makes good co-production possible as well as what gets in its way.

Concluding comments

Taken across 64 distinct projects over five years, the evidence suggests that the Collaboration and Co-Production Fund should no longer be understood simply as a collection of relatively small public engagement awards. Its more significant role appears to be as an enabling and catalytic fund.

Relatively modest awards create the time, permission and resources needed for academics and external partners to try something together. In some cases the immediate activity is itself the principal benefit. In others, that first project establishes trust, provides evidence that an approach works, changes how people think about collaboration and creates the foundation for something considerably larger.

Over time, those trajectories have produced continuing partnerships, new resources and knowledge, changes to academic and partner practice, additional funding, new opportunities for students and communities, and examples of activity becoming embedded within Warwick and partner organisations.

Appendix: Programme profile (2021 - 2025/26)

Distribution across faculties

The portfolio has achieved a relatively broad spread across Warwick's three main faculties.

Faculty/area	Projects	Share
Faculty of Social Sciences	26	41%
Science, Engineering and Medicine	19	30%
Faculty of Arts	17	27%
Cross-faculty	1	2%
Professional Services	1	2%
Total	64	100%*

*Percentages are rounded and therefore total slightly over 100%.

The distribution demonstrates that the Fund has developed considerable reach across the University. Social Sciences represents the largest proportion, accounting for around two-fifths of projects, but there is also substantial representation from Science, Engineering and Medicine and Arts. Almost six in ten projects sit outside Social Sciences, reinforcing that collaborative and co-produced engagement has developed across a wide range of disciplinary settings.

At departmental level there are some concentrations of activity – particularly within Warwick Medical School, WMG, Education Studies and Modern Languages & Cultures – alongside projects from a much longer tail of departments including Law, Sociology, Psychology, Philosophy, History, Classics, Politics, Economics, Life Sciences and Theatre and Performance.

Year	Project title	Lead applicant	Department	Faculty
21-22	Raising awareness about contraception and other sexual and reproductive health services	Abimbola Ayorinde	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
21-22	RGS-IBG visit to Warwick	David Lambert	History	Faculty of Arts
21-22	Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Collaboration	Friederike Schlaghecken	Psychology	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
21-22	Pen to Canvas	Ian Sansom	SCAPVC - Warwick Writing Programme	Faculty of Arts
21-22	Intergenerational Connections	Jayanthi Lingham	Politics	Faculty of Social Sciences
21-22	Empowering Young Voices	Karen Simecek	Philosophy	Faculty of Social Sciences
21-22	Engagement with Warwickshire Young Carers	Michael Wyness	Education Studies	Faculty of Social Sciences
21-22	Constellations of Home	Nadine Holdsworth	SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies	Faculty of Arts
21-22	Experiencing Music in Different Ways	Oksana Trushkevych	Physics	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
21-22	South Warwickshire Silver Denarii Coin Hoard Project	Paul Grigsby	Classics & Ancient History	Faculty of Arts
21-22	IDIERI 10	Rachel Turner-King	Education Studies	Faculty of Social Sciences
21-22	Blast Fest	Sanjay Sharma	Centre for Interdisciplinary Methodologies	Faculty of Social Sciences
21-22	Mobile Community Pantry Coventry and Warwickshire	Thijs Van Rens	Economics	Faculty of Social Sciences
21-22	Doing Things Differently – Inclusive Leadership Symposium	Vishalakshi Roy	SCAPVC	Faculty of Arts
22-23	What Do You Do All Day? A mixed method approach to uncovering the unseen realities of creative work in the West Midlands	Chris Bilton	SCAPVC - Centre for Cultural and Media Policy Studies	Faculty of Arts
22-23	Habitus: Belonging Project	Claire Anderson	Education	Faculty of Social Sciences
22-23	Regeneration	Darius Koester	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
22-23	Systems of System: Environmental and Racial Justice, a view from the visual arts	Fabienne VIALA	School of modern languages and cultures	Faculty of Arts
22-23	Creative cultural connections to the history of St Vincent	Kate Astbury	School of Modern Languages and Cultures	Faculty of Arts
22-23	Memory Lane Cafe	Kate Owen	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
22-23	Creativity in Biology	Kevin Moffat	School of Life Sciences	Faculty of Social Sciences

Year	Project title	Lead applicant	Department	Faculty
22-23	Stitch in Time	Margaret Low	Warwick Manufacturing Group	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
22-23	Embedding Evaluation Practice Within The Local Arts Sector	Mark Scott	Warwick Business School	Faculty of Social Sciences
22-23	Inventing Rugby – Collaboration between WMG and Rugby Art Gallery and Museum	Phil Jemmett	Warwick Manufacturing Group	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
23-24	Youth Support Programme (YSP) A Transnational Partnership for Developing 21st Century Skills	Asima Iqbal	Warwick Manufacturing Group	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
23-24	Monumental Visions Speculative Futures Through Art	Becca Randle	Warwick Arts Centre	Faculty of Arts
23-24	Warwick Design Thinking Award	Bo Kelestyn	Warwick Business School	Faculty of Social Sciences
23-24	Behaviours of Concern at Special Schools Sharing Experiences	Hayley Trower	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
23-24	Refugee and migrant health awareness and promotion	James Heath	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
23-24	Memory Lane Cafe	Kate Owen	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
23-24	Widening access for adult learners	Kerry Dobbins	Academic Development Centre	Faculty of Social Sciences
23-24	Floating artistic impressions of coordination and communication in aquatic microbial worlds	Orkun Soyer	School of Life Sciences	Faculty of Social Sciences
23-24	Warwickshire Silver Denarii Coin Hoard Project	Paul Grigsby	Classics & Ancient History	Faculty of Arts
23-24	Warwick Education Studies and Warwickshire Schools Education Services	Sally Blakeman	Education Studies	Faculty of Social Sciences
23-24	Transport related policies and people with disabilities	Shravani Sharma	Warwick Manufacturing Group	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
24-25	Siegfried Bettmann	Christine Achinger	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Faculty of Arts
24-25	Empowering Black and Asian Women Menopause	Claire Mann	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
24-25	De-stigmatising womens health through performance	Sioda Adams	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
24-25	Youth Engagement Empowerment Initiative	Freeha Azmat	Warwick Manufacturing Group	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
24-25	Drop the Mask Lived experiences of neurodiversity	India Holme	Research & Impact Services	Professional Services
24-25	Conversation and Coffee Classes	Jane Bryan	School of Law	Faculty of Social Sciences
24-25	Connecting Vincentians to their History	Kate Astbury	School of Modern Languages & Cultures	Faculty of Arts

Year	Project title	Lead applicant	Department	Faculty
24-25	Health Check Pop-up for under-served communities	Kate Owen	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
24-25	Positive Migration Strategies	Michael Gray	Applied Linguistics	Faculty of Social Sciences
24-25	Supporting Young People's Digital Literacy	Michaela Gummerum	Psychology	Faculty of Social Sciences
24-25	Co-created Song Writers	Nadine Holdsworth	Theatre & Performance Studies	Faculty of Arts
24-25	Digital resources equity	Samantha Flynn	Centre for Educational Development, Appraisal & Research	Faculty of Social Sciences
24-25	Early Action Benefits Advice Hub	Tara Mulqueen	School of Law	Faculty of Social Sciences
24-25	Connections and Conversations Through Poetry	Yanyan Li	Applied Linguistics	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Expressions of Justice: Creative dialogues on Punishment, Hope and Redemption	Anastasia Chamberlen & Bobby Harrison	Sociology	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	ReClaiming Birth: Community Voices on C-Section Experiences in the Midlands	Beck Taylor	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
25-26	Welcoming victim perspectives in research	Faye Claridge & Rebecca Richardson	Sociology	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Real Friends Steer You Right!	Gitit Kadar Satat	Psychology	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Hearing the voices of young asylum seekers: An arts-based sociolinguistic exploration	Jai Mackenzie, Joy Robinson & Elizabeth Packer	Applied Linguistics	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Creating Democratic Spaces through Spoken Word Poetry	Karen Simecek & Lisa Mead	Philosophy	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Photography, Heritage & Representation	Kate Astbury	Modern Languages & Cultures	Faculty of Arts
25-26	Health Champion Project	Kate Owen & Mohammed Alobeid	Warwick Medical School	Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine
25-26	Solihull's Youth Voice Project	Katie Crompton	Education Studies	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Overflowing Without Disappearing: Exploring Delirium Through Collaborative Film and Performance with Young People Across Borders	Lara Barzon & Sarah Worth	Theatre & Performance Studies	Faculty of Arts
25-26	SPRY - Scam Perception and Resilience in Youth	Michaela Gummerum & Charlotte Hooper	Psychology	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Exhibition and public talks on Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester	Naomi Pullin & Heidi Meyer	History	Faculty of Arts
25-26	EmpowerAI Local Skills, Global Tools	Ninna Makrinov	Warwick Manufacturing Group	Faculty of Science, Engineering & Medicine
25-26	SymbioSphere	Orkun Soyer	Life Sciences	Faculty of Social Sciences
25-26	Tamil Heritage Workshops	Shavena Vigneswara Kumar & Vithu Karunakaran	English	Faculty of Arts

