**Short guide for WIN researchers on working with non-scientists**

*Written by WIN Engagement staff*

*Last updated: November 2023*

Collaborating with non-scientists can take many forms, with people from a wide variety of backgrounds and expertise. Each collaboration is unique, but there are some fundamental principles and tips that will apply for most situations, which we have gathered below. Contact Carinne Piekema and Hanna Smyth (WIN Engagement team) for individual support.

Expectations

* Recognise the expertise of everyone you are collaborating with. Even though they do not have science expertise, their professional expertise in their own field, and/or their lived experience expertise, bring valuable insights that will differ from yours.
* Early in the collaborative process, discuss *mutual* benefits: what will each person/organisation gain?
* Make sure any outputs are agreed together, with a clear understanding of who will work on each task.
* For any work that is published as a result of the collaboration, make sure that the work of the non-scientists is appropriately recognised (e.g. on papers, they could be recognised in the acknowledgements section if it's not appropriate to have them as an author).
* For larger collaborations (e.g. organisations collaborating on an institutional level rather than 1:1 individual collaboration), consider drafting an ‘MOU’, a Memorandum of Understanding, to formally outline expectations.
* If discussing anything of potential commercial sensitivity, then you or the collaborators may want to put a Confidential Disclosure Agreement or a Non-Disclosure Agreement in place. These can be drawn up and signed by all parties by the team at OUI.
* From the beginning, look ahead to the future of the collaborative relationship after the defined project has ended. Are there sustainable ways to maintain a connection? Do both parties understand how and when the nature of the relationships will change?

Time

* Many industries work on much faster timelines than academia. However, others (particularly museums and schools) require event dates to be set much further in advance than would be required in academia. Thus, discussing expectations around timelines and speed of work is essential early in the collaborative process.
* At the beginning of the project or relationship, designate a schedule for check-ins; e.g. a recurring meeting time.
* Agree on the format of meetings: will they be in-person or online? Is an agenda expected or will they be more informal chats? Etc.
* If you're working with busy people, you may only be able to get 15 – 30 minutes for a meeting. Make sure that you prepare the content for the meeting accordingly to ensure that you get the most out of this time.

Money

* Don’t expect anyone’s time/expertise for free; before you approach someone you want to work with, make sure you have access to funds to pay them, or a plan for acquiring funds (e.g. involve them in writing grant applications, and cost their future time into the application). WIN’s Engagement team can also assist with drafting these sections of grant applications. As a reference point, the [NIHR’s guidance on paying PPI contributors](https://www.nihr.ac.uk/documents/payment-guidance-for-researchers-and-professionals/27392) sets a rate of £25/hr. If they are a professional with their own company then you might be able to pay them as a consultant - contracts can be drawn up and agreed at a departmental level, with clear schedule of work, deliverables and payment schedules.
* University payment processes are notoriously slow and challenging to navigate. Be upfront with your collaborators about this; discuss slow payment times and other potential challenges; and do your part to complete and submit finance paperwork promptly to avoid further delays.

Communication

* Scientists *and* non-scientists are susceptible to using jargon from their respective fields! Try to minimise your own use of jargon, and define terms that may be unfamiliar to your collaborators; meanwhile, don’t hesitate to ask if your collaborators are using terms you’re unfamiliar with.
* If you are presenting your project to non-scientists, make sure you have adapted your slides to suit their needs. Think about who they are, what their priorities are/what they care about and centre your messaging around that. The engagement team can help you with generating materials that are suitable for lay audiences
* Discuss early in the process what communication channels work best for the people you’re working with. (e.g. Zoom or Google Meet instead of Teams? How to share documents? Text or WhatsApp instead of emails?)