

## The Let's Get Real approach



Let's Get Real (LGR) projects use collaborative action research to support arts and heritage organisations to become more relevant, resilient and responsive to digital cultural changes .

While each LGR project looks at a distinct question related to digital cultural change, the overall 'LGR approach' remains consistent across all LGR projects and includes a combination of impacts, research methodologies, applied principles, learning models and project processes. This has been developed and iteratively improved over six years through 6 projects, working collaboratively with 120+ organisations and 150+ individual participants.

### LGR impacts

LGR projects seek to build and use knowledge to effect practical change for the arts and heritage sector. Each LGR project aims to do this by effecting change at four levels: individual, organisational, peer networks and sectoral, with each informing the others to ensure long lasting and meaningful impacts. LGR projects do this specifically by:

- Nurturing the personal confidence of participating individuals by building the digital literacies needed in a changing work environment.
- Building organisational capacity by supporting participating organisations to identify, design and embed relevant changes.
- Fostering collaborative working and best practice across relevant peer networks.
- Develop shared understanding for the arts and heritage sector by translating the impact of key societal trends/ideas through to the specific needs of our sector.

### LGR research methodologies

The LGR change objectives are realised through a combination of **collaborative research** and **action research** methodologies.

**LGR collaborative research methodologies** involve a joint process of knowledge production that leads to new and unique insights for the arts and heritage sector in relation to the specific question posed by each LGR project. Each project draws upon the expertise, knowledge and experience of all project participants, in their roles as representatives of the sector.

**LGR action research methodologies** are applied by each project participant, in their roles as specific organisational entities within the arts and heritage sector. This involves undertaking an iterative process of active organisational change throughout the project. Action research not only assumes an 'intention to change' from the participants involved, but is situated in and draws upon a diversity of institution-specific contexts and experiences.

Both methodologies are closely aligned and are informed by each other. For example a key source of collaborative knowledge gathering for each LGR project comes from the combined learning from each individual piece of organisational action research. Similarly, the scope, aims and reviewing of each piece of action research is informed by the collaborative knowledge developed across the project.

### **LGR applied principles**

The LGR research methodologies make use of certain established principles and frameworks to help plan, run and evaluate the research. These are:

*'Story of change' principles* - These help project participants plan, evaluate and embed organisational change activities throughout the project, ensuring these are connected to their organisation's wider public purpose and impact on society. We draw upon the [Happy Museum Project's thinking](#) in this area.

*'Human centred design' principles* – These help project participants be creative, innovative, and able to solve problems, with their target audiences in mind. We are influenced by [Dana Mitroff Silvers'](#) and [Derby Museums'](#) work in this area.

*'Digital literacy' principles* - These ensure participants develop the individual capabilities and confidence needed to support their organisations and the wider sector as they adapt to changes influenced by digital culture. These are being developed as part of the AHRC-funded [One by One project](#) that Culture24 is part of.

### **LGR learning model**

The LGR research methodologies are also shaped by, and draw upon knowledge developed through, the LGR learning model. This model promotes learning from others, learning through doing and learning together. Whilst each element is individually important in promoting learning, it is the combination of all 3 elements that brings distinct learning value to LGR participants and the project overall.

*Learning from others* - LGR projects bring in people with a varied range of backgrounds, experiences and expertise to help inform, support, guide and reflect on the knowledge being collaboratively produced. In particular we look to encourage input from people with knowledge of relevant practice (both from inside and outside the sector), policy and theory. We also encourage bringing audience and community voices into the process.

*Learning by doing* - LGR projects support participants to run practical research experiments in their own organisational contexts and settings to test out ideas generated during the collaborative discussions. All these research experiments have the following characteristics:

- Seek to answer a question
- Involve a practical action
- Are simple and small-scale in nature
- Use existing resources, content, channels and technologies
- Are time-bound
- Are measurable

*Learning together* - LGR projects create a community of supportive peers with a shared sense of purpose. We actively seek out ways to foster and promote collaborative working amongst this community through the LGR projects in order to combine participants' wealth of individual experiences, expertise and knowledge into an invaluable shared source of understanding.

We also encourage participants to take time to reflect on their individual learning through the various roles that they perform across the project (expert, peer, change agent, researcher, learner) and explore how this can then be applied back into their organisations and across the sector.

### **LGR project processes**

LGR projects conduct research via a structured process that combines collaborative discussion with expert input and individual practical action. This typically consists of:

4 collaborative workshops involving facilitated discussions, participatory workshop activities, expert and group presentations, individual reflection and informal networking

4 research periods between workshops (and following the final workshop) run by each participant in their own contexts and involving structured assignments and ongoing mentoring and support

Ongoing online collaboration between all project participants facilitated by Culture24