Being a festival hub

Benefits of being a hub

Hubs are institutionally led and cover a range of humanities research, providing opportunities to work collaboratively and build relationships with colleagues. They have institutional heft behind them and local links and relevance, meaning they can really increase visibility of research inside and out of your organisation.

Hub activities can build and strengthen ties with local communities, providing the means of working with and learning from local people. For Being Human, hubs are a beacon of best practice public engagement and represent the festival in your area.

Being the programme lead

Hubs work best when one person (with public engagement experience) takes the lead. They should work with a dedicated hub team, but have general ownership and oversight. The lead should:

• Be the central point of contact with the Being Human team, keeping them up-to-date with developments and having regular meetings.

• Have the time to dedicate to building a hub as it can be a lot of (rewarding!) work.

• Guide academics through the process, sharing information provided by the festival to all involved.

• Generate and submit copy for the festival’s events listings, ensuring consistency amongst submissions and that each event is coming along well.

• Take control of promoting the hub, working with your marketing team and Being Human.

Mapping out the festival cycle

Being Human provides a festival timeline and it’s important that you build your own hub timeline around this. A few things to think about:

• Will there be crunch points in your timeline, perhaps due to other work commitments? Try to anticipate and plan your festival prep around these.

• Who do you need to notify of forthcoming deadlines? E.g. give your university’s marketing team good notice if you want them to generate media.

• Do you have enough time to get everything done? Be realistic to avoid a stressful lead up to the festival.
Quality checking your programme
Your programme should have a diverse range of events that all aim for best practice public engagement. While some may be larger and more ambitious, small-scale activities must also be purposefully designed to provide a meaningful and enjoyable experience. Make sure:

- Each event is created for a specific target audience and their interests and concerns continuously shape the format and content.
- All events in your programme are public engagement with research and none slip into being purely cultural/arts activities or lectures/seminars.
- You have thought about the cultural and community partners you could get involved.
- There are clear promotional strategies and direct ways of reaching the communities you want to engage.
- Academics working on activities are aware of the festival's goals and how to package their research for a public audience.

Top tips for a successful hub:

- **Make the most of the opportunity.** E.g. try to get media coverage, invite your VC to events, think about legacy projects.
- **Be an active part of the wider festival.** Attend training, be involved in central events and any possible media opportunities.
- **Know when to ask for help.** Build a festival team and use the skills and knowledge of those at your organisation.
- **Think about how a hub could work at your university.** E.g. could you get student volunteers involved or make writing a review of the hub part of a module?
- **Think about your activities as part of a series.** E.g. how will you spread events across the festival and not let any fall by the wayside.

Positive channels of communication
If you’re the programme lead, it’s essential that you keep everyone in the loop and enthusiastic. Hubs require a lot of work and a good team ethos, so make sure:

- Everyone is kept up-to-date with developments, including academics, venues and community partners. Don’t forget all the different people involved in bringing an event together.
- Schedule in regular meetings with those organising individual events. Share festival information, toolkits and attend Being Human’s training workshops together.
- Make it an enjoyable team endeavour, share progress and achievements, and create a sense of pride in pulling off an amazing programme!
Your hub heroes!

When it comes to putting together a successful hub, team work definitely makes the dream work! Below are a few people you will need to bring together, as well as some of the information you’ll need to share with them to build positive working relationships. Add in any groups specific to your programme.

As part of your **core hub team** I’ll help with the general running of the hub. I need to know how I can fit this in with my other commitments and when there are going to be busy periods. I’d like clear responsibilities within the team so we’re all sharing the workload.

As one of your **community partners** we’ll work together throughout the process to bring about a co-produced project. I’d like to be clear on how the relationship will work and I have a few questions. Let’s stay in regular contact, but I might not always be available during your working day.

As an **academic** I want to work with you to share my research in creative ways! What is my level of responsibility for the event? For example, will you be organising it? Please keep me up-to-date with hub developments and news from Being Human. I may only check emails during term time so let me know in advance of upcoming deadlines.

As part of your organisation’s **marketing and communications** team I want to share the good news about your hub. Let’s talk about the possibilities and what I’ll need in terms of content, images, etc. I need a good amount of lead-in time as we’re always busy.

As your **venue**, tell me how your activities develop and how you want to use the space. We can probably help with promotion and it’ll work best if we get behind the project itself. Let me know in advance if you need any digital support for recording your event or additional staff on hand.

**Being Human** will send you lots of helpful information during the festival cycle and might ask you to get involved in wider festival activities. We’d like regular updates on your hub and to know about any significant changes. You’ll be our main point of contact so please share information with your team.