

## Top Tips and Take-aways

### Approaches

- Aim for the highest degree of collaboration initially, even if subsequently you have to modify your approach, and remain open to incorporating co-designed or co-creative aspects as relationships develop and opportunities emerge.
- There is more than just one community - think beyond location, be aware of internal diversity, ask yourself 'whose voices may be absent or silenced?'
- Consider the duration of an assessment as well as the full time equivalent.
- **Collaborative approaches are partnerships**, with give and take on both sides.
- Resource participation – with time and personal commitment, as well as practical support.
- You are not in full control of a collaborative process. Coming from a position of power, this can feel uncomfortable. It is worth recognising this, but do not allow it to undermine the process.

### Methods Selection

- **Methods are productive and creative.** Methods choices are not neutral or purely technical decisions but will shape the assessment process and resulting knowledge.
- Methods selection requires careful consideration not only in terms of what the methods can do, but also what they might not reveal or who might be excluded.
- A **multi-methods approach is recommended** to reveal complexity, diverse stories and multiple values, including indications of silences and absences within the material.
- Multiple methods provide a range of alternative avenues for engagement that can help in overcoming (some!) barriers to participation.
- Implementing a method is not the same each time, even within individual cases, as relational aspects and the evolving context will influence the process.
- Combinations of methods help shape the emergent research design and practice. This might be in terms of referrals of potential participants (so called 'snowball sampling'), identifying the most appropriate or effective modes of engagement, or linking outputs and participants from one activity with a subsequent method.

### Assessment Process

- Be prepared to listen.
- Aspects of the known context might suggest suitable approaches and methods, but consideration has to be given to emerging understandings and changes in the context as the assessment unfolds. These factors will need to be negotiated in real time during the assessment.
- **Effective implementation remains flexible** – responsive to and working with the evolving context and opportunities that arise.
- What happens during an assessment is often more critical to your understanding than the resulting outputs. It is as important to document and reflect on these interactions as the final values stated/materials produced/decisions reached.
- Aim for the highest degree of collaboration and be prepared to **invest time** in identifying and building relationships with communities in order to achieve this.
- Reflect on how your own profile and collaboration or association with specific organisations and formal or informal gatekeepers might impact on the research process.
- **Be open to the unexpected and prepared to change or adapt your intended approach or methods.**
- There is a lot that can be learned from 'unsuccessful' activities.