

UCL Public Engagement Beacon Bursary: Project Evaluation & Learning Form

The project evaluation and learning form aims to provide a simple way to document what the project has done and achieved. Projects are asked to reflect on their experience, explain any problems they had, summarise what they have learned, and lessons they would pass on to other projects or can be applied elsewhere. Although a template is provided, the nature and scope of the form will depend on the project undertaken.

Projects should submit a complete project evaluation and learning form no later than **one month** after the project end date.

The form will be reviewed by the UCL Public Engagement Unit and summarised to the Steering Group. As we are keen to share experiences of public engagement, completed sections of the form (with approval from the author) will be used to develop UCL public engagement case studies which will be published on the UCL website.

Background:

Name	Michael Edwards
Job Title/Course	SL/ Leverhulme Emeritus Fellow
Organisation/Department	Bartlett School, UCL
Project name	UCL Just Space
Total project value (£)	£1,500 + large quantity of volunteer time
Beacon funding (£)	£1,500
Funding breakdown <i>Please note the the project actual spend, broken down into specific costs</i>	Admin/tech support (Richard Lee) £1,200 Refreshments at 3 meetings: £300
Location	UCL
Start and end dates	September 2009 and continuing through 2010. Report is up to end of February.
Project partners <i>(Please list the partners involved in the project, include names, organisations and contact details where appropriate).</i>	Just Space Network (c/o Deirdre McGrath, London Civic Forum, Young Foundation, Bethnal Green Deirdre@londoncivicforum.org.uk and Richard Lee richardlee50@googlemail.com and member organisations actively participating:: London Forum of Amenity and Civic Societies London Tenants Federation Hayes and Harlington Community Forum King's Cross Railway Lands Group (KXRLG) London Gypsy and Traveller Unit Race on the Agenda (ROTA) London Voluntary Service Council (LVSC) Women's Design Service Camden Tenants Federation North Finchley Agenda 21 Environment Forum Friends of the Earth Black Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration Network Age Concern London Third Sector Alliance (3SA) Spitalfields Community Association

Summary of project / activity: What happened?

A group of about 15 students and staff from the Bartlett school (mainly Planning) in UCL met and worked together with representatives of community sector organisations in the preparation of comments and objections to the Mayor's Draft Replacement London Plan throughout the consultation period October '09-January '10. This work focussed in two main meetings, early and late in the period to which UCL people contributed analyses, summaries and critiques of sections of the Plan, comparisons with previous versions and other technical support. The work was progressed and shared through <http://ucljustspace.wordpress.com> Twenty-four organisations made submissions which, to varying degrees, drew upon the shared material from UCL and on the very high-quality discussions at the December meeting. These submissions are collected at <http://justspace.wordpress.com>

The work will resume in May and build up to the public hearings in summer 2010.

Who was the audience for this project? Please give details.

The audience was the same as the participants.

What was the project supposed to accomplish? Please outline the aims and objectives agreed at the start of project, note if they changed during the project and the process and reasons for making those changes.

Our bid said:

This engagement helps make democracy real through empowering groups (some deprived or disadvantaged, other scattered) to represent their needs at the level where crucial decisions are increasingly being taken (on housing, transport, economic development, environment, open space and so on).

A strengthened relationship with UCL will add a lot of value (and potential research support) to the representations and be a useful grounding for university staff and postgrads. Hitherto in the training of planners 'engagement' has been on the syllabus but not often in the learning experience.

Grant support for this kind of work will certainly help to embed engagement as a more central dimension in the understanding and teaching of planning and urban studies. It will also strengthen the contact networks of UCL staff with external groups and organisations.

Did the project succeed in its aims? How do you know? Specifically, please outline any evaluation and assessment undertaken.

This has been a great achievement, with a group of UCL students making substantial (and much appreciated) contributions to the submissions of citizen groups in London and valuing the experience very highly indeed relative to the rest of their MSc studies.

We know this from feedback in meetings and by email from both sets of participants - see below.

What things do you think worked well and why? When filling in this section, please try to think about all aspects of the project (e.g. initial inception, project activities and project outcomes), from a range of perspectives.

Leaders of the voluntary and community groups proved to welcome the efforts of UCL participants in digesting and summarising aspects of the London Plan; UCL students were highly effective in this work and later went on to generate critical evaluations which proved valuable to various groups in the formulation of submissions. Alison Blackwood of the London Voluntary Service Council wrote:

I found the project incredibly useful - apart from Harini's help, there was also the analysis of all the different parts of the plan and the impact assessments. The level of discussion at our meetings was really detailed because so much work had been done by the students. I used this work in my own responses and thought it gave them an additional insight and authority that they would have lacked if the project had not gone ahead.

I know it was also useful to many other voluntary and community sector organisations who used our draft responses, or the website, as a basis for their own responses to any or all of the three papers out for consultation at the time. I received e-mails or had telephone conversations in relation to this project from groups including North London CVS network, Black Neighbourhood Renewal and Regeneration Network, Race on the Agenda, London Resource Network, School for Social Entrepreneurs, Age Concern London, bassac and Greater London Volunteering.

Juliana Martins, postgraduate at UCL, comments " ... I believe my participation in the Just Space project was very fruitful for me. It was an opportunity to study the London Plan and to learn about different perspectives for the economic development of London. My involvement also allowed me to meet people that lead important community organizations and to get to know their concerns about London. Finally, Just Space presented a very interesting opportunity to engage in a key planning process and to contact with the public participation system in the UK.

In terms of future developments for Just Space or similar projects, one possibility would be to create an "engagement unit" within the Bartlett School of Planning that would coordinate these projects in a more formal structure. This unit could be responsible for advertising these projects, organize related seminars, promote the development of dissertations within the Masters courses, among other things. The main advantage would be to have a contact point and to create a more continuous project that would, I believe, encourage student participation.

Julienne Chen, postgraduate visiting UCL from Amsterdam, wrote "... I think it's a great project, ... and was tremendously helpful in gaining a more in-depth understanding of the London/British planning system, the real and up-to-date concerns of involved parties (that we don't read about in textbooks) and evidence-based policy (which is a new concept for Americans). It was also a good avenue to get involved in something UCL-based that is productive and extends beyond the school's academic boundaries – also lots of potential as a seed to breed inter-departmental collaboration in the future.

I think it could attract more students if there was slightly more organization in terms of expressing tasks, meetings, vision, timelines but I think there will be lots of material from this time (and the helpful website) that is needed to produce something like that. I'm more than happy to help with some kind of graphical representation/road map that could be easily modified for future iterations. For instance, I think because there were so many meetings with different students present, it was a little difficult to figure out who was doing what, what were the most important pieces and what still needed to be done. I also wonder about engaging more community organisations in addition to students and staff.

What I did – Attended one of the Just Space meetings. Helped draft and layout the report on the FOE/Just Space meeting in Nov. Wrote evidence pieces on mixed-tenure housing and regeneration effects. Summaries of representations and tabulation of issues and groups.

Bernard Bourdillon of the London Gypsies and Travellers Unit said: "... LGTU did not learn anything significant in relation to the technicalities of its core business from UCL or jsn. This is NOT a case of straight knowledge transfer. But the network and UCL's involvement did allow LGTU, for the first time, to make connections with other tenants' organisations (probably more than 95% of London Gypsies and Travellers, whether in houses or on sites, are tenants), with environmental organisations (the Westway traveller site is one of the most polluted residential areas in the UK), and with others who have been through the EiP process recently.

For me the most interesting new information and understanding was around the London housing system – from meeting with Duncan Bowie and the London Tenants Federation. Next was the guidance on the EiP structure from the old hands.

June Taylor, UCL postgraduate, among many comments, writes: "... the meetings were all intellectually stimulating, as was the process of working on the paper. ...taking part in the process encouraged me to look at the draft Plan, and the discussions gave me more of a feel for its contents than i would have had otherwise. attending the meetings also gave me some interesting insights into how different organisations operate and how they relate to one another in coalitions, the 'internal politics' of representing diverse interests and the tensions within the plan-making process, and helped develop my professional self-confidence. all of this seems like job-useful professional development, so for me being involved in the process has been a success...

To review the submissions made by the member-groups, and for many other useful links and documents, go to <http://justspace2010.wordpress.com>

What problems emerged during the project and how were they tackled?

Specifically, what barriers did you face and how did you overcome them? Again, please try to think about all aspects of the project, from a range of perspectives.

It has so far proved impossible to engage the time and commitment of staff in other departments of the Bartlett of of UCL. This has been a great failure.

Looking back, what things do you wish you had known when the project started?
Please list anything you feel would have been helpful to know at the start which could have made the project easier.

Difficulty in engaging non-Bartlett parts of UCL. It seems to take a lot more than emails to relevant individuals.

Staff participants fewer than expected, probably because in peak teaching season.

Has the project led to any new activity or relationships? *For example has the project led to any changes within the department or any changes in teaching or research? Please give details.*

Not yet in formal (syllabus) terms or new reasearch. However the product of these months has been so valuable for students as well as for citizen groups that we shall be able to build changes for future years.

Which of the Beacon aim(s) did it address? *The aims for the Beacon for Public Engagement Programme are as follows:*

Create a culture within HEIs and research institutes and centres where public engagement is formalised and embedded as a valued and recognised activity for staff at all levels and for students	yes
Build capacity for public engagement within institutions and encourage staff at all levels, postgraduate students, and undergraduates where appropriate, to become involved	yes for pgs
Ensure HEIs address public engagement within their strategic plans and that this is cascaded to departmental level	not yet
Create networks within and across institutions, and with external partners, to share good practice, celebrate their work and ensure that those involved in public engagement feel supported and able to draw on shared expertise	yes
Enable HEIs to test different methods of supporting public engagement and to share learning	valuable experiment

Specifically, how does the project addresses these aims?

Network development and capacity development have been excellent but we have yet to have any impact on strategic plans or on formal research strategies

More information: *Please attach photographs of what happened, if you have one. Please also list any titles or links to more information on the project (for example reports, articles, websites).*

<http://ucljustspace.wordpress.com/> the main medium of the project
and then
<http://justspace2010.wordpress.com>

which carries all the representations finally submitted by the citizen groups - a separate web site because UCL is not party to these documents.

The participant students are very keen to continue, and to ensure that this kind of work is embedded in the programmes of the faculty in a more secure and continuous way.