

PLANNING YOUR STORYTELLING PROJECT



Getting the project off the ground starts with understanding the need and potential scope of your project and bringing together the right people - it's what makes everything else possible. Based on what we learned through Cassandra, we've gathered some practical insights about building these crucial relationships early on - from finding your first collaborators to planning where your storytellers will eventually perform. Here's what worked for us and what we discovered along the way.

The Foundations of the Project

Identifying the Need and Defining Your Goals

Is there a gap in your storytelling scene that you think a project like this could help fill? For example, a lack of access to professional development opportunities or a narrow audience base? Identifying the Gap will help you define your project goals and understand who you might need to involve, who you want to reach, and what you are hoping to achieve. Here are some examples;

- Creating better access to training, mentoring, and professional development for younger storytellers
- Developing storytelling as a tool for activism
- Exploring ways to use storytelling as a catalyst for social awareness and change
- Facilitating dialogue through storytelling
- Developing platforms and events for new storytellers to showcase their work
- Amplifying diverse voices and perspectives in storytelling
- Supporting experimental and innovative storytelling styles
- Establishing a strong storytelling network and peer support community
- Expanding outreach to engage new and younger audiences in storytelling

Defining the Scope and Reach of Your Project

Defining the reach of your project will be the next essential step to understanding its structure and practical needs. It will help clarify who needs to be involved, where they need to be located, and how often they can come together.

For example, the Cassandra Project had an international geographic reach. A primary aim was to lay the foundations for a new European network - a caring and supportive community of the next generation of storytellers who could support, promote, and collaborate with one another across borders.

Your project might also have a geographic focus, whether local, national, or international. Or, its reach may be shaped by other factors, such as shared interests, cultural heritage, or

artistic approaches rather than geography. Understanding the scope of your project and the nature of its reach will guide decisions about partnerships, logistics, and long-term sustainability.

Where and when will the public performances take place?

Deciding where and when your final performances will take place is another key step in shaping your project.

We recommend embedding the final performances within the existing festivals or established events of the partner organisations. They will provide ready-made infrastructure, including technical support, marketing, and an established audience base. This can help your project gain visibility, reach broader audiences, and connect with established cultural networks. Being part of an existing event can also help you align your project with their schedule and resources.

If you choose not to work within a festival, you may need to plan for technical support, marketing, and building an audience from scratch. While this takes more effort, it gives you the freedom to tailor the event to your vision. You can design the setting, tone, and partnerships to suit your project and engage audiences who might not have been reached before.

Think about who you want to experience your work with and how the event's context will shape its tone and appeal. Are you aiming for bold, forward-thinking events that celebrate innovation? Or would your project thrive in a setting that honours cultural heritage? Collaborating with other art forms, such as theatre, music, or visual arts, can also broaden its reach.

For the Cassandra team, all 15 storytellers performed in Amsterdam, hosted by project partners The Storytelling Centre, and in Rome as part of the FEST annual conference. Additionally, the storytellers showcased their work in smaller groups at the international festivals hosted by project partners. These high-profile satellite events were celebrated in the March 24 Cassandra Newsletter, find out more about them here:

Who should you work with?

Project Lead: The person, people or organisation who is responsible for overseeing the whole project, driving it forward and supporting everyone involved. They are ultimately responsible for securing funding and delivering evaluations. (If you are reading this manual, this might be you!)

Project Partners: These are the storytelling or performance organisations that may recruit mentors and participant storytellers, manage and support the artists, promote their work, and physically host the final performances.

However, not all projects will require partners in this way. In some areas, there may not be many established storytelling organisations, and the focus might instead shift to working directly with independent artists, community groups, or other creative practitioners.

Mentors: Experienced storytellers who guide and support emerging artists through the creation process as they develop their own craft, stories, and performance skills.

Storytellers: The emerging artists who will each research, develop and perform socially engaged storytelling performances.

Project Partners

You might already have strong connections with potential partners, or this project could be an opportunity to find new collaborators and networks and explore fresh approaches. Either way, we would recommend that the focus is on finding partners who have the long-term capacity for committed involvement, who value storytelling's distinct artistic qualities, who are dedicated to art form development, and who bring their own perspectives and expertise to the work.

The following criteria may help identify suitable partners for a strong, sustainable collaboration:

Criteria for Project Partners

- **Alignment with Project Goals**
Ensure the organisation's mission and values align with your project's objectives, whether it's fostering social change, promoting cultural exchange, or developing artform development. Look for partners who share a genuine enthusiasm for the purposes of the project.
- **Capacity to Host Events**
The organisation should have experience organising storytelling (or very similar) performances with access to venues and rehearsal spaces.
- **Resources and Stability**
Ensure they have the capacity, the financial, logistical and administrative capability to follow through on commitments for the duration of your project. Ability to appoint and manage a mentor.
- **Openness to Collaboration**
Flexibility, clear communication, and willingness to share resources and decision-making. For international partnerships: cultural sensitivity and language capabilities.
- **Commitment to Diversity**
Interest in reaching broader and more inclusive audiences and willingness to explore programming that fosters inclusivity.
- **Interest in Social Engagement**
Commitment to using storytelling to address social challenges and foster community connections.

- **Existing Networks and Influence**
Strong connections to target artists, audiences or communities. Established partnerships within local, national, or international networks to amplify impact.
- **Capacity for Audience Development**
Experience or interest in engaging new, underrepresented, or diverse audiences and a willingness to experiment with outreach and programming strategies.
- **Commitment to Professional Development**
Openness to learning and growing alongside the project in a peer-to-peer environment.
- **Network and Promotional Reach**
Strong ties to the arts/cultural scene and established audience base. Capacity for marketing and promotion to maximise visibility.
- **Financial and Technical Management**
Experience handling budgets, meeting funding requirements, and ensuring financial transparency. Technical support for events, documentation, or online platforms if needed. Adequate health and safety protocols, insurance coverage, and contingency planning. Compliance with child protection and data protection policies.

Find out more about the Cassandra partners on the project website.



Co-funded by the
Creative Europe Programme
of the European Union