

Reviewing 'Our Direction 2023–2028' and planning for the future

In October 2023, we launched our ambitions for the next five years, '[Creating Change Together: Our Direction 2023–2028](#)', capturing our vision for the future and our approach to achieving this vision.

As 2026 marks the midpoint of 'Our Direction', Co-Production Collective team members and two external collaborators spent four months carrying out a thorough review to assess our progress and identify opportunities for improvement. Our aims for this review were to:

- Revisit our core values of being transparent, kind, inclusive, embracing of change and reflective, and explore how we continue to infuse our values into our work
- Reflect on whether the ambitions from 'Our Direction' are still relevant
- Review the key focus areas of Co-Production Collective and determine if anything is missing.

Methods

As part of our review, we gathered feedback from five key groups:

Group	Method of gathering feedback
Co-producers	Online survey and virtual workshop
Allies Group	Two virtual workshops
Partners	Online survey
UK research funders	One-on-one interviews
Co-Production Collective staff	One-on-one interviews

Key themes across our conversations

1. Co-Production Collective values and ambitions remain highly relevant

Our collaborators recognise the relevance of the Collective's values and ambitions.

- Co-producers, partners, and research funders believe the Collective's current strategy remains relevant, also recognising progress against our ambitions.
- Co-Production Collective Allies Group stated that the current strategy, while relevant, requires a more explicit mention of our commitment to anti-racism.

2. Promoting and embedding learning and facilitating culture change are key strengths

We have identified the Collective's role in helping others understand and implement co-production.

- Co-producers scored the Collective highest for promoting and embedding learning.
- Partners credited the Collective with changing organisational practices, helping them engage communities and sustain their work across co-production.
- Funders identified opportunities for the Collective and similar organisations to provide mentoring and support.

3. Greater transparency and accountability are needed

This is the most consistent area for improvement.

- Co-producers and Allies Group members called for greater visibility of how decisions are made and how community input influences outcomes.
- Staff and co-producers noted the lack of following up with partners to assess if long-term improvements were made across co-production. Accountability could be improved through these follow-ups.

4. Partnerships matter, but quality is more important than quantity

Multiple groups emphasised the importance of deeper, more meaningful relationships between Co-Production Collective staff and partners.

- Partner survey findings suggest that longer-term and closer relationships with our partners generate the greatest impact across co-production activity.
- Staff highlighted the importance of working with partners genuinely committed to co-production to foster healthier, more productive, and longer-lasting partnerships.

5. Co-Production Collective should aim to be leaders in co-production

Several groups shared that Co-Production Collective is known as a driver of culture change, while recognising that the Collective could play a stronger leadership role.

- Co-producers and funders acknowledge the Collective's role in teaching the value of co-production and inclusive practice.
- The Allies Group recommended strengthening relationships with research funders to support systemic change. They also challenged the Collective to be more confident about being leaders in co-production, stating: "Co-Production Collective should be the drivers of change, not facilitators of it."

Our values and ambitions moving forward

We see this review as an opportunity to re-commit ourselves to our values. Based on the feedback we have received, we feel it appropriate to continue upholding our five core values: **transparent, kind, inclusive, embracing of change, and reflective**. We also wish to expand on our definition of 'inclusive' by more explicitly stating our commitment to being anti-racist and anti-discriminatory in our practice. Our new definition is:

"Proactively promoting inclusivity by being equitable, anti-racist and anti-discriminatory in our approach, removing barriers, recognising people's strengths, and supporting their development."

The wording describing our ambitions for the remainder of 'Our Direction 2023–2028' has been edited as a result of the feedback received (new additions have been **bolded**):

- **Lead culture change:**

Set a positive example by our approach to co-production to inspire role models within organisations, **research funders**, and systems to adopt and embed co-production and put people at the heart of everything they do.

- **Promote and embed learning:**

Promote the benefits of co-production, contribute to projects, and share our learning with others. Challenge the barriers that prevent co-production from being valued and widely embedded. **Encourage our partners to engage in reflective self-assessment in the months and years after working with us on co-production projects.**

- **Plan for the future:**

Ensure our organisation's long-term sustainability and provide support to organisations and co-production projects to assist them in making an impact through their work. **Enable sustainable partnerships by developing a Co-Production Collective code of conduct that guides collaborative working.**

- **Grow our community and live our values:**

Build a stronger and more diverse community and truly embody our values in all aspects of our work to make co-production more meaningful, equitable, and accessible to all who are interested. **Share how decisions are made and how community input influences outcomes through various communications channels.**

We will continue to monitor our progress for the remainder of 'Our Direction 2023–2028.' If you have any thoughts you would like to share with us, please contact us via email at coproduction@ucl.ac.uk. And if you would like to read more about the review we conducted, please fill out [our request form](#) and we will send you a copy of our full review.

Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this review, including our co-producers, our partners, UK research funders, the Co-Production Collective Allies Group, and our staff.

Contact details

For further information please contact us via email at coproduction@ucl.ac.uk