



National
Co-ordinating
Centre for
Public Engagement

Change Agency Assessment Tool: Skills, knowledge and attributes for culture change

Recruiting staff to help support culture change

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This guide is based on work done by Dr Ed Stevens as part of the Catalyst Seed Programme at Bath University, funded by RCUK.*

When trying to create a culture of public engagement within an institution you often need change agency roles in some form in order to drive the change and support capacity building. It's rare for a role to be explicitly pitched as one of 'change agency'. Far more likely, there'll be elements of a job and certain activities that are about causing change. Here we provide a framework to highlight common categories of change agency and the skills, knowledge and attributes to look for when recruiting to jobs with elements of creating change.

Once you have a clear idea of the type of role you are recruiting for and the skills, knowledge and attributes you want to encourage you will need to liaise with your Human Resources team who will help you draft a role description and get it graded appropriately.

STAGE (1) – What are the change agency activities of your role?

We suggest that there are four broad change agency roles:

- **Catalyst** – working as a strategic catalyst for change
- **Facilitating solutions** – providing, or supporting, researchers to find solutions to PE issues
- **Facilitating processes** – delivering activities that help deliver the strategic vision for PE
- **Brokerage** – sharing knowledge and resources within and without your organisation

Take a look at the activities aligned with the four roles in the table over the following page, how many of these do you expect to be done in the role? Do the activities expected to be undertaken align more strongly to one or more of the roles?

The frequency of the activities undertaken does not matter, just noting whether or not they are part of the job you have in mind.

You may find that you are expecting activities to be undertaken that are spread fairly evenly across the four change agency roles. In this instance, ask yourself: Are you happy with spreading your change agency work in this way? Or should you be focusing more strategically on particular roles? Do you need a larger team or more support from existing roles to enable the work that is expected? If you are creating a role within a faculty or department, how does this fit with existing roles at institution level (if there are any)?

You may also want to consider the seniority level given to the role. For example, if you want your change agent to "Facilitate and influence strategic conversations on the PE agenda with senior managers", will that person have the opportunity to be in the meetings where those strategic conversations happen?

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Role 1: Catalyst for change</u></p> <p>This person is key to precipitating strategic change in your organisation / department / team in relation to PE. They exert influence, lead and manage a variety of activities that aim to deliver change.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Role 2: Facilitating solutions</u></p> <p>This person either provides researchers with solutions to PE issues or supports them to identify their own, appropriate solutions to a defined issue.</p>
<p>Through your work, do you do any of the following in relation to PE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead a range of internal stakeholders to meet specific PE objectives; • Horizon scan, keeping ahead of developments in the PE agenda; • Contribute to / facilitate key discussions and debates with regards PE that inform organisational strategy; • Facilitate and influence strategic conversations on the PE agenda with senior managers and practitioners; • Support relevant aspects of funding proposals • Produce a shared vision for PE across your team / department / organisation that aims to create and support conditions for change; • Incubate and develop key influencers for PE across your organisation; • Research and respond to relevant, emergent policy agendas; • Devise / manage a communications strategy for your work. 	<p>Through your work, do you do any of the following in relation to PE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act as a highly-specialised, knowledgeable agent within your organisation / department / team, providing 1-1 (coaching) and 1-many (workshop) support to tackle identified PE issues; • Draw on your broad range of knowledge for a variety of ends in support of researchers; • Present solutions based on your analysis of stakeholders' strengths; • Facilitate ideas generation activities; • Understand, and signpost researchers to relevant third party resources; • Advocate for the sourcing and combining of knowledge from within and without the University to create relevant solutions for identified issues.
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Role 3: Facilitating processes</u></p> <p>In their day-to-day role, this person works in ways that enhance processes for change, helping to implement the strategic vision that acts as a catalyst for change.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Role 4: Brokerage</u></p> <p>This person shares knowledge and resources both within and outside your organisation in relation to PE.</p>
<p>Through your work, do you do any of the following in relation to PE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively build relationships based on mutual support and mutual learning both within and without the organisation, maximising synergies where possible; • Create shared understandings and shared language amongst internal and external stakeholders; • Facilitate PE-related discussions; • Coach / mentor / train individuals / groups in their understanding of PE; • Provide a conducive space / environment for inter- and intra-organisational collaboration; • Deliver events that support reward or recognition for activities undertaken by engaged researchers; • Identify opportunities for new engaged research activities; • Contribute to a culture of continuous learning with regards PE. 	<p>Through your work, do you do any of the following in relation to PE:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link researchers with stakeholders from the same, and different, organisations / sectors; • Build a database of contacts and resources; • Act as a broker between your organisation and others; • Discuss the principles of co-creation and co-production and identify opportunities to engage partners in these principles; • Explore linkages between 'know-how' and 'know-what'; • Recognise and broker knowledge that can support small-scale local change or than can be transferred and applied on a large-scale across contexts; • Share knowledge through a range of on- and off-line channels.

STAGE (2) – Change agency skills, knowledge and attributes

Now you have a better idea of the type of change agency roles you expect to be performed, spend some time thinking about which ones are most important to the role, do these elements fall into one or more of the role categories? Use the tables on the following pages to select the skills, knowledge and attributes that are required for these roles.

- **Skills** = abilities you acquire through education and other experiences; learned competencies
- **Attributes** = characteristics / attitudes / mindsets that you possess that enable you to undertake a particular role effectively
- **Knowledge** = in this instance, we mean explicit knowledge in relation to the PE agenda

CATALYST
SKILLS <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Ability to influence senior managers (authority / credibility)○ Inspiring others – mobilising advocates from across multiple audiences○ Networking and outward-looking – having multiple constructive conversations with multiple actors○ Inclusive – bringing the (right) people together○ Advocacy – strongly advocating for change across the organisation○ Horizon scanning – exploring novel and unexpected issues as well as persistent problems or trends○ Agenda setting – influencing change topics and activities○ Facilitation – asking the right questions in the right way○ Constructive feedback and analysis tailored to multiple audiences○ Marketing – building profile both within and without the organisation
KNOWLEDGE <p>PE-related knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Knowledge of the diverse, cross-disciplinary approaches to engaged research➤ Knowledge of UKRI's and the Research Councils' public engagement with research agendas➤ Awareness of the wider UK HE landscape and how it might impact upon the PE agenda
ATTRIBUTES <p>Change agents acting as catalysts should demonstrate high:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Resilience➤ Optimism➤ Motivation, a strong belief in the cause➤ Diplomacy and political nous➤ Agility, able to respond to opportunities as and when they arise <p>In addition, the Catalyst role necessitates the ability to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Comfortable crossing departmental and organisational boundaries, understanding the language and values of differing participants➤ Visionary
FACILITATING SOLUTIONS
SKILLS <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Active listening – ensuring your response is tailored to the other○ Research – sourcing solutions and contacts○ Customer focus – ensuring that the change services the needs of the organisation and its individuals○ Ideas generation – providing options for ways forward○ Expertise – drawing on personal / professional experiences to facilitate solutions
KNOWLEDGE <p>PE-related knowledge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Knowledge of a diversity of non-academic publics➤ Knowledge of diverse research methods➤ Awareness of (organisational) constraints that research and researchers operate under➤ Awareness of the wider UK HE landscape and how it might impact upon the public engagement with research agenda
ATTRIBUTES <p>Change agents looking to facilitate solutions should be:</p>

- Pragmatic, aware of organisational (and other) constraints
- Credible so that people listen to the solutions with open ears
- Resourceful with an enabling, 'can-do' attitude
- Decisive to avoid intransigency
- Creative, able to approach a problem from a multitude of perspectives
- Adaptable, producing solutions that suit the relevant context
- Objective where necessary, acting as a critical friend

FACILITATING PROCESSES

SKILLS

- Coaching / mentoring / counselling – providing 1-1 support where necessary
- Internal and external communication skills – including marketing that supports a culture of change
- Facilitation skills – nurturing discussions, spaces, and activities in the support of change
- Training – devising and delivering relevant professional development opportunities
- Inspiring others – mobilising advocates from across multiple audiences
- Quality control – ensuring the quality of change processes
- Teamwork – supporting a variety of different teams to achieve the change with the ability to move seamlessly between them

KNOWLEDGE

PE-related knowledge:

- Understanding the drivers for external publics to engage
- Understanding the drivers for researchers to engage
- Knowledge of local, national, and international opportunities for engagement
- Knowledge of diverse research methods
- Awareness of HE functions and processes
- Expertise in engaged research activities

ATTRIBUTES

In order to support change processes, change agents should be able to:

- Harness / influence people's enthusiasm and capabilities to facilitate change
- Adapt their 'field of vision' to action change (moving from the 'big picture' to the 'little picture')
- Act as a critical friend, a skilled helper

In facilitating this role, change agents will demonstrate:

- Insatiable curiosity for how processes might support the change
- Boundless enthusiasm for the change and the associated activities

BROKERAGE

SKILLS

- Networking – making contacts with the (right) people
- Communication skills – specifically, the ability to have multiple conversations with multiple actors
- Information gathering – building contacts and resources to support the change
- Being a node on a network – acting as a connection point to your organisation

KNOWLEDGE

PE-related knowledge:

- Knowledge of how to build effective research collaborations
- Knowledge of a diversity of non-academic publics
- Understanding the drivers for non-academic publics to engage
- Understanding the drivers for researchers to engage

ATTRIBUTES

In undertaking a brokering role, change agents will demonstrate:

- Social and emotional intelligence, empathy for the 'other'
- The ability to translate work into communities' specific language
- Reflexivity so that the same mistakes are not made again and again

*The work to categorise and elucidate the skills, knowledge and attributes of change agency roles in public engagement was developed by [Dr Ed Stevens](#), Manager of the [Arts & Humanities Research Institute](#) at King's College London. Twitter: @KingsAHRI