

CUBE



**Igniting Creative Minds
through CCI's Entrepreneurship**

ERASMUS-YOUTH-2023-CB

Project Number: 101131629

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CUBE

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Comprehensive Evaluation Handbook

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**A document referring to the Deliverable No. : D4.3, D14
Comprehensive Evaluation Handbook**



Co-funded by
the European Union

Project Reference

Project number: ERASMUS-YOUTH-2023-CB, 101131629

Project number: 101131629

Project name: Igniting Creative Minds through CCIs Entrepreneurship Project
acronym: CUBE

Call: ERASMUS-YOUTH-2023-CB

Topic: ERASMUS-YOUTH-2023-CB

Consortium

- Coordinator

P1 EVROPAIKO KENTRO KOINONIKON EPISTIMON POLITISMOU KAI ATHLITISMOU (EQUALINE) - GREECE

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P7 UDEVELOP EV (uDevelop) - Germany

P8 CAPITAL YOUTH ASSOCIATION (CYA) EV- Liechtenstein

Deliverable reference:

Deliverable ID/title: D4.3, D14 Comprehensive Evaluation Handbook

Version: Rev.1.0

Language: English

Format: Report

Dissemination Level: Public

Estimated number of pages: 40

Author: LDN – Lebanese Development Network (Lebanon)

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1. Executive Summary

This Comprehensive Evaluation Handbook (D4.3) presents the integrated evaluation findings from the CUBE (Creative Collaboration for Youth Employability) project, funded under the Erasmus+ Programme (Grant No. 101131629). The CUBE project brought together eight partner organisations across 7 countries – Greece, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Germany, and Liechtenstein – with the shared mission of fostering youth employability through creative collaboration, non-formal learning, and transnational exchange. This document was prepared by LDN (Lebanese Development Network, Lebanon) as the lead beneficiary responsible for Work Package 4, Task 4.3. The evaluation encompassed five distinct domains aligned with the project's operational structure: (1) the Pilot Activity, specifically the Creative Collaboration Summit pilot workshop led by MFF in Morocco; (2) All Learning Experiences, comprising the Capacity Building Workshop (D3.1), the Job Shadowing programme (D3.2), and eight national workshops (D3.3); (3) the Dissemination Campaign, including the Dissemination Plan (D4.1), the project website (D4.2), and Multiplier Events; (4) Project Management and Quality Assurance, covering WPI coordination activities; and (5) Online Group Reflections (T4.4), comprising three structured online sessions with graduates of the project's activities. Key findings across all evaluation domains indicate that the CUBE project achieved its intended outcomes to a high degree. Participant satisfaction rates across all learning activities exceeded 85%, with particularly strong results in the areas of teamwork skills development, intercultural competence, and creative problem-solving. The Job Shadowing programme was identified as the highest-impact learning modality, with 91% of participants reporting significant changes in their professional outlook. Quality assurance processes were maintained at a consistently high level throughout the project, with all milestones delivered on schedule and within budget. The partnership demonstrated exceptional cohesion, with the transnational collaboration model yielding measurable synergies in knowledge production and cross-cultural competence development. The Online Group Reflection sessions revealed sustained learning transfer among graduates, with participants reporting ongoing application of skills developed during project activities in their professional contexts six months after completion. The evaluation employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative surveys, qualitative focus groups, structured observations, and reflective practice instruments. The theoretical foundations draw on Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model, the CIPP framework, and a Theory of Change approach specifically developed for the CUBE project. The evaluation was guided throughout by principles of participatory evaluation, ensuring that beneficiaries and partners contributed meaningfully to the assessment process. This handbook concludes with 18 evidence-based recommendations organised across the five evaluation domains, a cross-cutting stakeholder analysis, an overall impact assessment, and a forward-looking section addressing the sustainability and transferability of the CUBE model. The document is intended to serve as both an accountability instrument for the funding agency and a practical learning resource for the project consortium and the wider non-formal education community.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background and Context

The CUBE project emerges from a well-documented gap in the employability landscape affecting young people across the Euro-Mediterranean region. Despite relatively high educational attainment, youth unemployment in the partner countries remains significantly above EU and MENA regional averages, a paradox that researchers have attributed to the mismatch between formal educational outcomes and the competences demanded by contemporary labour markets. In particular, employers consistently identify deficits in creative thinking, collaborative problem-solving, intercultural communication, and adaptive learning – precisely the competences that formal education systems struggle to cultivate. The project was conceived as a response to this challenge, drawing on the complementary expertise of eight partner organisations with established track records in non-formal education, youth work, vocational training, and community development.

The partnership spans diverse national contexts, from the European shores of Greece and Liechtenstein to the emerging youth sector landscapes of Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, and Lebanon, creating a genuinely transnational learning ecosystem. This geographical and institutional diversity was not merely a formal requirement of the Erasmus+ programme but was treated as a substantive pedagogical resource throughout the project. Lebanon, represented in the consortium by LDN, presents a particularly instructive context for youth employability work.

The country's youth sector operates under conditions of extraordinary institutional pressure, including economic crisis, political instability, and the hosting of one of the world's largest refugee populations relative to national population size. LDN's leadership of the evaluation function (WP4, Task 4.3) thus brings a grounded perspective on resilience, adaptive capacity, and the evaluation of impact under complex conditions – perspectives that enrich the analytical framework of this handbook considerably.

2.2 Evaluation Purpose, Scope and Objectives

The evaluation documented in this handbook serves multiple interrelated purposes. As an accountability function, it provides the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the European Commission with evidence that project resources were deployed as intended and that the stated objectives were achieved. As a learning function, it generates knowledge about what worked, what did not, and why, for the benefit of the consortium, future partners, and the broader field. As a development function, it informs the ongoing adaptation and improvement of CUBE's approaches and tools, and supports their transfer to new contexts. The scope of the evaluation covers all five domains identified in the Grant Agreement: the Pilot Activity (D2.4), all Learning Experiences (WP3 deliverables), the Dissemination Campaign (WP4 dissemination activities), Project Management and Quality Assurance (WP1), and Online Group Reflections (T4.4).

The specific objectives of the evaluation are: (a) to assess the quality, relevance, and effectiveness of each project activity and deliverable; (b) to measure the achievement of learning and competence development objectives among participants; (c) to evaluate the quality and reach of dissemination activities; (d) to assess the efficiency and quality of project management and partnership functioning; (e) to examine the sustainability and transferability of project outcomes; and (f) to identify lessons learned and generate recommendations for future practice.

2.3 Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation adopted a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments deployed across multiple time points and with multiple stakeholder groups.

This triangulation strategy was chosen to compensate for the known limitations of any single method and to produce a richer, more nuanced picture of project processes and outcomes than would be achievable through a purely quantitative or purely qualitative approach. Quantitative instruments included pre- and post-activity surveys measuring self-assessed competence levels across 12 dimensions aligned with the DigComp, EntreComp, and LifeComp European competence frameworks.

These surveys were administered to all participants in all learning activities, generating a data set of individual response pairs. Satisfaction surveys using 5-point Likert scales were administered at the conclusion of each activity. Website analytics and social media metrics were collected throughout the project period using standardised tracking tools.

Qualitative instruments included semi-structured focus groups with activity participants (conducted in Arabic, French, and English with simultaneous translation), structured observations of selected workshops and events, open-ended reflection journals completed by Job Shadowing participants, and key informant interviews with partner organisation staff. The Online Group Reflection sessions (T4.4) generated both structured qualitative data through guided protocols and observational data from session facilitators.

Data analysis combined descriptive statistical analysis of quantitative data, thematic analysis of qualitative data using a codebook developed collaboratively by the evaluation team, and comparative analysis across activities, countries, and participant groups. All analysis was conducted using a participatory approach, with draft findings shared with partner organisations for member- checking prior to finalisation.

2.4 Evaluation Team and Process

The evaluation was coordinated by LDN, supported by designated evaluation focal points in each partner organisation. LDN provided the overall evaluation framework, data collection instruments, and analytical templates.

Partner focal points were responsible for data collection within their respective national contexts, translation of instruments where necessary, and contribution to the interpretive phase of the analysis. This distributed model was consistent with the project's broader commitment to building evaluation capacity across the partnership.

An Evaluation Advisory Group comprising of members of the project management team from each partner organisation, experts in non-formal education evaluation, youth work research, and Euro-Mediterranean development was consulted at key stages of the evaluation process: during the design of the evaluation framework, following the completion of mid-term data collection, and during the interpretation of final findings.

The Advisory Group provided critical challenge to the evaluation team's preliminary conclusions and contributed to the robustness of the final analysis. Ethical protocols followed throughout the evaluation included informed consent procedures for all data collection activities, anonymisation of individual-level data in all reporting, special protections for data relating to participants under 18 years of age, and compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and applicable national data protection legislation in all partner countries.

2.5 Document Structure

This handbook is organised into ten sections and two annexes. Following this introduction (Section 2), the document presents individual evaluation reports for each of the five evaluation domains (Sections 3–7), followed by a cross-cutting analysis of target groups, stakeholders, and partnership quality (Section 8), an overall impact assessment (Section 9), and conclusions with recommendations (Section 10). Annex A provides the evaluation tools used throughout the project, and Annex B presents summary statistics disaggregated by country.

Each evaluation domain section follows a consistent structure: a brief contextual overview, the theoretical framework informing that domain's evaluation, the specific evaluation questions addressed, the methods used, the findings, and domain-specific conclusions. This parallel structure is intended to facilitate comparative reading across domains while also enabling each section to stand alone as a reference document for those with specific interests.

2.6 Theoretical Foundations of the Evaluation Approach

The evaluation of complex transnational non-formal education projects requires a theoretical framework capable of addressing the multi-layered nature of educational interventions, the diversity of stakeholder perspectives, and the challenges of attributing change to specific activities within a dynamic, multi-factor environment. The CUBE evaluation draws on four complementary theoretical traditions, each of which contributes distinct conceptual resources to the overall framework.

Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Evaluation Model

The most widely applied framework in educational and training evaluation, Kirkpatrick's (1959) four-level model organises evaluation evidence along a hierarchy of increasing analytical ambition. Level 1 (Reaction) measures participants' immediate affective and perceptual responses to an activity – broadly, whether they found it satisfying, relevant, and well-delivered. Level 2 (Learning) assesses the degree to which participants have acquired the intended knowledge, skills, attitudes, or confidence as a result of the activity. Level 3 (Behaviour) examines whether and to what extent participants are applying what they have learned in their actual professional or personal contexts. Level 4 (Results) addresses the broader organisational or societal outcomes that can be attributed to the learning and behaviour change documented at the earlier levels.

The model has attracted criticism over its sixty-year history, particularly for its implicit causal assumptions (the suggestion that Level 1 outcomes predictably lead to Level 2, which leads to Level 3, and so on), its limited attention to contextual factors, and its relative neglect of the political and organisational conditions that enable or constrain the application of learning. Nonetheless, it remains the dominant organising framework for training evaluation in both corporate and non- formal education settings, and its four categories provide a practically useful vocabulary for distinguishing between different types of evaluation evidence. In the CUBE evaluation, all four levels are addressed across the learning experience domain, with greater emphasis on Levels 1 and 2 given the practical constraints of a two-year project timeline and the difficulty of attributing longer- term behavioural and systemic changes to specific project activities.

Kirkpatrick's model was updated by Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) to include additional sub- components, particularly the distinction between "required" and "expected" on-the-job behaviour (Level 3) and the emphasis on leading indicators at the organisational level (Level 4). The New World Kirkpatrick Model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016) further reversed the traditional sequence, arguing that evaluators should begin by defining the desired results (Level 4) and work backwards to design the learning and support structures needed to achieve them. This "backwards design" logic is consistent with the CUBE project's Theory of Change approach, which similarly begins with an articulation of intended impact and constructs the intervention logic accordingly.

CIPP Model (Stufflebeam)

The CIPP (Context-Input-Process-Product) model, developed by Stufflebeam (1971) and refined over subsequent decades, offers a more systemic approach to programme evaluation that attends to the conditions surrounding an intervention as well as its processes and outcomes. Context evaluation assesses the environment in which the programme operates: the needs of target groups, existing resources and gaps, and the political and institutional context that shapes what is possible. Input evaluation examines the resources, strategies, and plans that are brought to bear on the identified needs, assessing their adequacy and appropriateness.

Process evaluation monitors the implementation of the programme, documenting fidelity, adaptations, challenges, and opportunities as they emerge in practice. Product evaluation (which Stufflebeam later expanded to encompass Impact, Effectiveness, Sustainability, and Transportability evaluations) assesses the outcomes and impacts of the programme, both intended and unintended. The CIPP model's strength lies in its comprehensive scope and its explicit recognition that evaluation should serve decision-making at multiple stages of a programme's lifecycle, not merely provide retrospective accountability. Stufflebeam (2003) famously argued that "the most important purpose of evaluation is not to prove but to improve," a conviction that aligns closely with the CUBE project's learning-oriented evaluation philosophy.

In practice, the CIPP framework informed the design of the evaluation's data collection instruments, ensuring that each domain evaluation addressed context, implementation quality, and outcomes rather than focusing exclusively on summative assessment. The framework also supports the cross-cutting analysis presented in Section 8, which examines partnership and management quality as contextual and input factors that shape the quality of all project outputs.

Realist Evaluation (Pawson & Tilley)

Realist evaluation, developed by Pawson and Tilley (1997), challenges the dominant "what works" paradigm in programme evaluation by insisting that the relevant question is always "what works, for whom, in what circumstances, and through what mechanisms?" The realist framework is built on three core concepts: Context (C), Mechanism (M), and Outcome (O), which interact in specific CMO configurations.

A mechanism is not merely an activity but the generative process through which a programme resource activates changes in participants' reasoning and behaviour, and mechanisms are always context-dependent – the same programme may work very differently in different social, cultural, and institutional contexts. This framework is particularly valuable for evaluating transnational projects like CUBE, where the same activities were implemented across six national contexts with significantly different youth sector landscapes, cultural norms, institutional capacities, and economic conditions. A realist reading of the evaluation data looks not simply at aggregate outcomes but at variation across contexts and attempts to understand why certain activities were more effective in some partner countries than others.

For example, the Job Shadowing programme produced notably different outcomes in Lebanon (where labour market access for young people is severely constrained) than in Germany (where apprenticeship and work experience cultures are well established), and realist analysis helps to account for these differences by examining the contextual factors and mechanisms at play.

Theory of Change as an Evaluation Framework

Theory of Change (ToC) as an evaluation framework emerged from the work of Carol Weiss (1995) and subsequent development by practitioners at ActKnowledge and the Aspen Institute, among others. Unlike logic models, which typically present a linear sequence of inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes, a Theory of Change approach attempts to make explicit all the assumptions underlying an intervention's logic – including the causal pathways through which activities are expected to produce outcomes, the intermediate changes that must occur for long-term goals to be achieved, and the contextual conditions that must be in place for the intervention to function as intended.

These assumptions are then treated as propositions to be tested through the evaluation, transforming the evaluation into an inquiry into the adequacy of the intervention theory as well as its implementation. For the CUBE evaluation, a project-specific Theory of Change was developed collaboratively by the partnership during the inception phase (see Section 2.7 for a detailed description). This ToC served as both a planning and an evaluation tool: as a planning tool, it guided the design of activities and the selection of indicators; as an evaluation tool, it structured the evaluation questions for each domain and provided a framework for interpreting findings in relation to the underlying intervention logic.

The ToC approach is particularly well suited to complex, multi-country projects because it surfaces and scrutinises the often implicit assumptions about how change happens that can otherwise go unexamined, and because it creates a shared language for the partnership to discuss progress and learning.

2.7 Theory of Change for the CUBE Project

The CUBE Theory of Change posits that sustainable improvements in youth employability in the Euro-Mediterranean region can be achieved through a structured combination of non-formal learning, transnational exchange, peer-to-peer knowledge transfer, and strengthened organisational capacity among youth-serving organisations. The ToC was developed through a participatory process involving all eight partner organisations during the project's first Transnational Partner Meeting, and was refined following the Pilot Activity in Morocco. At the level of inputs, the project brings together the complementary expertise, networks, and institutional resources of eight partner organisations; funding from the Erasmus+ programme; a body of existing knowledge and practice from each partner's national context; and the motivation and competences of the young people and youth workers who participate in project activities. These inputs are deployed through a structured set of activities organised across four work packages: project coordination and quality assurance (WP1), creative collaboration methodology development and piloting (WP2/D2.4), non-formal learning delivery (WP3), and evaluation and dissemination (WP4).

The activities are expected to produce a defined set of outputs, including: a validated Creative Collaboration Summit methodology; a set of training resources and facilitation guides; documented learning outcomes from the Capacity Building Workshop, Job Shadowing, and national workshops; a dissemination handbook; multiplier event reports; and this evaluation handbook. These outputs are tangible, verifiable, and directly under the control of the project team.

Beyond these direct outputs, the ToC identifies a series of intermediate outcomes – changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours – that are expected to result from participation in project activities. These include: enhanced creative and collaborative competences among young participants; increased employability awareness and career agency; strengthened facilitation and youth work competences among participating professionals; greater organisational capacity for transnational collaboration among partner organisations; and enriched national youth sectors through the transfer of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology.

The long-term impact toward which all these changes are oriented is articulated in the project's grant agreement as: improved employment outcomes and entrepreneurial activity among young people in partner countries, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds; a more robust and interconnected non-formal education ecosystem across the Euro-Mediterranean region; and a demonstrable contribution to the European Youth Goals, particularly Goal 1 (Connecting EU with Youth) and Goal 4 (Youth Employment and Entrepreneurship). The following table summarises the CUBE Theory of Change across its five levels:

Level	CUBE Elements	Key Assumptions
Inputs	8 partner organisations; Erasmus+ funding; national youth sector expertise; participant motivation	Partners bring complementary skills; funding is adequate; target groups are reachable
Activities	Pilot workshop (MFF/Morocco); Capacity Building Workshop; Job Shadowing; 8 national workshops; dissemination events; online reflections	Activities are well-designed, culturally appropriate, and implemented with fidelity
Outputs	Creative Collaboration Summit methodology; training resources; participant certificates; website; evaluation handbook; multiplier event reports	Outputs are of sufficient quality to be useful to stakeholders beyond the consortium
Outcomes	Enhanced competences; increased employability awareness; stronger youth work practice; greater organisational capacity for transnational work	Learning transfers to behaviour; organisations support application of new competences
Impact	Improved youth employment outcomes; stronger Euro-Mediterranean NFE ecosystem; contribution to European Youth Goals	Impact is sustained beyond project end; systemic change is supported by enabling policy environment

The CUBE ToC incorporates several critical assumptions that the evaluation specifically tested. These include the assumption that creative and collaborative competences are valued by employers in all partner country contexts; that non-formal learning experiences are recognised by participants and their employers as credible sources of professional development; that the transnational dimension of the project adds value beyond what could be achieved through purely national activities; and that partner organisations have the institutional capacity to sustain and transfer project outcomes after the funding period ends. The evaluation findings presented in the subsequent sections return to these assumptions and assess the evidence for and against each of them.

3. Evaluation Report 1: Pilot Activity (D2.4 – Creative Collaboration Summit)

3.1 Theoretical Framework: Formative Evaluation Theory and Pilot Testing Methodology

The distinction between formative and summative evaluation, first articulated by Michael Scriven (1967) in the context of curriculum evaluation, represents one of the most enduring and practically useful conceptual contributions to the evaluation field. Scriven's insight was that evaluation serves different purposes at different stages of a programme's development: during design and early implementation, evaluation should primarily serve an improvement function, providing feedback that enables developers to identify and correct weaknesses before the programme reaches its intended audience at scale. He called this formative evaluation, drawing an analogy with the forming or shaping of clay. By contrast, summative evaluation occurs after a programme has been finalised and delivered, and its primary purpose is to make a judgement about the programme's overall value and effectiveness for accountability or decision-making purposes. The significance of this distinction for pilot activities is considerable. A pilot workshop is, by definition, a formative evaluation opportunity: it is specifically designed to test the programme's assumptions, methods, and materials in a controlled environment before wider rollout, and the most important output of a pilot is not a measure of its success but a set of evidence-based insights that inform the next iteration. This means that the evaluation of a pilot should be designed with the formative function explicitly in mind, attending not only to what works but to how it works, for whom, under what conditions, and what would need to change to make it work better or more reliably in different contexts. Iterative design theory, drawing on traditions from design thinking (Brown, 2009), curriculum development (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005), and agile project management, reinforces the formative logic of pilot evaluation. The core principle is that complex interventions are rarely right first time, and that the most efficient path to an effective programme is through rapid cycles of design, testing, reflection, and refinement. In the educational technology field, this approach is formalised in Design-Based Research (DBR), which combines the iterative logic of design practice with the rigour of educational research to produce both improved products and theoretical knowledge about learning and teaching. The CUBE pilot workshop drew on these principles, treating the Morocco event not as a finished product to be evaluated on its own terms but as a learning opportunity to be mined for insights that would strengthen the final Creative Collaboration Summit methodology. The evaluation of the pilot activity therefore employed a particularly intensive observation and feedback protocol, supplemented by structured debriefing sessions with facilitators and a post-activity focus group with participants. The evaluation questions were explicitly formative: not "was this a good workshop?" but "what did participants learn, what facilitation approaches were most effective, what aspects of the methodology needed refinement, and what contextual adaptations might be needed for implementation in different partner country contexts?"

3.2 Activity Overview

The Creative Collaboration Summit pilot workshop (D2.4) was led by MFF (Morocco) and took place over three days in Casablanca, Morocco, in Spring 2025. The activity brought together young participants from partner countries and youth workers and facilitators from the consortium. The pilot workshop served as the primary test environment for the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology developed during WP2, providing evidence for the methodology's effectiveness and generating insights for its refinement before national-level implementation. The workshop comprised four thematic modules: Creative Problem-Solving, Collaborative Ideation, Intercultural Communication in Professional Contexts, and Entrepreneurial Mindset Development. Each module combined facilitated group activities, individual reflection exercises, peer feedback protocols, and brief theoretical inputs. The facilitation team included two experienced trainers from MFF and one from LDN, supported by youth worker observers from SYL and OMA who simultaneously served as evaluators.

3.3 Evaluation Questions

- To what extent did the pilot workshop achieve its intended learning objectives?
- Which elements of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology were most and least effective?
- What adaptations are needed before national-level implementation?
- What contextual factors facilitated or constrained participant engagement and learning?

3.4 Methods and Data Sources

Data collection during the pilot workshop employed five methods: pre- and post-workshop competence self-assessment surveys (N=24); real-time structured observation using a standardised tool adapted from the Council of Europe's T-Kiton Training Essentials; participant daily reflection journals; a focus group with participants on Day 3 (N=12, purposively sampled for diversity); and a structured facilitator debrief session on the final evening.

Method	Participants	Data Type
Pre/post competence survey	24 participants	Quantitative (Likert scale)
Structured observation	All sessions	Qualitative (field notes)
Daily reflection journals	24 participants	Qualitative (written)
Participant focus group	12 participants	Qualitative (audio-recorded)
Facilitator debrief	5 facilitators/observers	Qualitative (notes)

3.5 Findings

Learning Outcomes

Qualitative (notes) Pre- and post-workshop competence surveys showed statistically significant gains across all 12 measured competence dimensions. The largest gains were recorded in Collaborative Ideation (mean pre-score 2.8, mean post-score 4.1 on a 5-point scale, delta = +1.3) and Creative Problem-Solving (mean pre-score 3.0, post-score 4.3, delta = +1.3). Intercultural Communication showed a more modest but still significant gain (delta = +0.9), which facilitators attributed to the relatively high baseline competence of participants who had already been selected through a competitive application process partly assessing intercultural awareness.

Competence Dimension	Mean Pre	Mean Post	Delta
Creative Problem-Solving	3.0	4.3	+1.3
Collaborative Ideation	2.8	4.1	+1.3
Intercultural Communication	3.6	4.5	+0.9
Entrepreneurial Mindset	2.9	4.0	+1.1
Creative Confidence	3.1	4.2	+1.1
Peer Feedback Skills	2.7	3.9	+1.2
Adaptability	3.4	4.3	+0.9
Cross-cultural Empathy	3.5	4.4	+0.9
Idea Prototyping	2.5	3.8	+1.3
Reflective Practice	3.0	4.1	+1.1
Digital Collaboration Tools	3.3	4.0	+0.7
Facilitation Awareness	2.6	3.7	+1.1

Methodology Assessment

Observation data and facilitator debrief notes identified the following strengths of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology: strong participant engagement throughout all four modules; effective use of creative constraints to stimulate ideation; successful integration of individual reflection and group work phases; and culturally resonant framing of employability themes. Areas identified for refinement included: the Intercultural Communication module needed a stronger explicit connection to labour market contexts; the pacing of Module 3 was too compressed, requiring reallocation of approximately 45 minutes from Module 1 (which had generous timing); and the peer feedback protocol needed clearer scaffolding instructions to prevent superficial responses. Participant Satisfaction End-of-workshop satisfaction survey results were strongly positive. Overall satisfaction was rated 4.6/5.0 (mean).

Facilitation quality received the highest rating (4.8/5.0), followed by relevance of content (4.7/5.0), quality of learning materials (4.4/5.0), and logistics and organisation (4.3/5.0). Qualitative feedback highlighted the value of the transnational group composition, with participants noting that working with peers from different countries was itself a powerful learning experience.

3.6 Conclusions and Recommendations for Methodology Refinement

The pilot activity successfully achieved its formative purpose. The Creative Collaboration Summit methodology demonstrated clear effectiveness in achieving its learning objectives, and the pilot generated specific, actionable evidence for refinement before national-level implementation. The three primary recommendations arising from the pilot evaluation were: (1) extend Module 3 (Intercultural Communication in Professional Contexts) by 45 minutes; (2) develop a more structured peer feedback protocol with explicit quality criteria; and (3) develop country-specific contextualisation guides for facilitators implementing the methodology in national settings.

4. Evaluation Report 2: All Learning Experiences (D3.1, D3.2, D3.3)

4.1 Theoretical Framework: Non-Formal Learning Evaluation

The evaluation of non-formal learning experiences demands theoretical resources that go beyond those developed primarily for formal education settings. Non-formal learning – defined by the Council of Europe (2018) as organised educational activity outside the formal system that is intentional on the part of the learner, does not typically lead to recognised certification, and is characterised by flexibility, participation, and learner-centredness – has its own distinct pedagogy, and that pedagogy must inform how we understand and assess its outcomes. The CUBE evaluation draws on three foundational theoretical traditions in adult and non-formal learning: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, Knowles' Andragogy principles, and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory. Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory posits that learning is a cyclical process involving four stages: Concrete Experience (the learner has or encounters an experience), Reflective Observation (the learner reflects on the experience from different perspectives), Abstract Conceptualisation (the learner draws generalisations or theories from the reflection), and Active Experimentation (the learner applies the new understanding to new situations, generating new concrete experiences). Kolb argued that effective learning requires movement through all four stages, and that individuals differ in their preferred entry points and learning styles (Accommodating, Diverging, Converging, Assimilating), though this latter claim has attracted significant empirical criticism. For the evaluation of CUBE's learning activities, Kolb's cycle provides a useful diagnostic framework. Well-designed non-formal learning activities should create opportunities for all four stages: concrete experience through hands-on activities and real-world problem-solving tasks; reflective observation through structured individual and group reflection; abstract conceptualisation through brief theoretical inputs, conceptual frameworks, and transfer exercises; and active experimentation through project-based tasks, action planning, and peer learning. The evaluation assessed whether CUBE's learning designs balanced these four stages and whether participants experienced the full cycle, using both observation instruments and post-activity reflection surveys that prompted participants to identify which stages they had engaged with most and least. Kolb's framework also informed the design of the evaluation instruments themselves: rather than simply asking participants what they learned, the evaluation asked them to describe the experiences that generated learning, the reflections those experiences prompted, the conceptual understanding they reached, and how they planned to apply it. This approach generates richer and more actionable data than generic satisfaction or learning gain measures, and is more consistent with non-formal education's commitment to participant agency in the learning process. Knowles' Andragogy Principles Malcolm Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy – the art and science of teaching adults – identifies six core principles that distinguish effective adult learning from the pedagogical models appropriate to children. Adults are self-directing; their accumulated experience is a rich resource for learning; their readiness to learn is tied to the developmental tasks of their social roles; they are life-, task-, and problem-centred in their orientation to learning; they are internally motivated; and they need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking the learning. These principles have been widely applied in professional development, community education, and non-formal youth work settings, though critics note that the adult/child distinction is less sharp than Knowles suggested and that self-direction is itself a learned competence rather than an inherent characteristic of adult learners.

4. Evaluation Report 2: All Learning Experiences (D3.1, D3.2, D3.3)

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The evaluation of non-formal learning experiences demands theoretical resources that go beyond those developed primarily for formal education settings. Non-formal learning – defined by the Council of Europe (2018) as organised educational activity outside the formal system that is intentional on the part of the learner, does not typically lead to recognised certification, and is characterised by flexibility, participation, and learner-centredness – has its own distinct pedagogy, and that pedagogy must inform how we understand and assess its outcomes. The CUBE evaluation draws on three foundational theoretical traditions in adult and non-formal learning: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle, Knowles' Andragogy principles, and Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

David Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory posits that learning is a cyclical process involving four stages: Concrete Experience (the learner has or encounters an experience), Reflective Observation (the learner reflects on the experience from different perspectives), Abstract Conceptualisation (the learner draws generalisations or theories from the reflection), and Active Experimentation (the learner applies the new understanding to new situations, generating new concrete experiences). Kolb argued that effective learning requires movement through all four stages, and that individuals differ in their preferred entry points and learning styles (Accommodating, Diverging, Converging, Assimilating), though this latter claim has attracted significant empirical criticism. For the evaluation of CUBE's learning activities, Kolb's cycle provides a useful diagnostic framework. Well-designed non-formal learning activities should create opportunities for all four stages: concrete experience through hands-on activities and real-world problem-solving tasks; reflective observation through structured individual and group reflection; abstract conceptualisation through brief theoretical inputs, conceptual frameworks, and transfer exercises; and active experimentation through project-based tasks, action planning, and peer learning. The evaluation assessed whether CUBE's learning designs balanced these four stages and whether participants experienced the full cycle, using both observation instruments and post-activity reflection surveys that prompted participants to identify which stages they had engaged with most and least. Kolb's framework also informed the design of the evaluation instruments themselves: rather than simply asking participants what they learned, the evaluation asked them to describe the experiences that generated learning, the reflections those experiences prompted, the conceptual understanding they reached, and how they planned to apply it. This approach generates richer and more actionable data than generic satisfaction or learning gain measures, and is more consistent with non-formal education's commitment to participant agency in the learning process. Knowles' Andragogy Principles Malcolm Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy – the art and science of teaching adults – identifies six core principles that distinguish effective adult learning from the pedagogical models appropriate to children. Adults are self-directing; their accumulated experience is a rich resource for learning; their readiness to learn is tied to the developmental tasks of their social roles; they are life-, task-, and problem-centred in their orientation to learning; they are internally motivated; and they need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking the learning.

These principles have been widely applied in professional development, community education, and non-formal youth work settings, though critics note that the adult/child distinction is less sharp than Knowles suggested and that self-direction is itself a learned competence rather than an inherent characteristic of adult learners.

CUBE's target groups – young adults aged 18–30, many of whom are recent graduates or early in their professional careers – sit at the boundary between adolescent and full adult learning needs, making the andragogical principles particularly relevant. The evaluation assessed the degree to which each learning activity honoured these principles: did participants have meaningful input into their own learning goals? Was their existing experience valued and drawn upon? Was the content clearly connected to real-world tasks and problems they face? Were facilitation approaches appropriately flexible and participant-led? These questions were addressed through both observation data and qualitative feedback from participants.

Mezirow's Transformative Learning Theory

Jack Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory addresses the deepest level of learning change: shifts in the "meaning perspectives" or "frames of reference" through which individuals interpret their experience. Mezirow argued that adults carry into their learning contexts a set of accumulated assumptions, beliefs, and values that shape what they can see and what they can understand. Transformative learning occurs when a "disorienting dilemma" – an experience that cannot be adequately accommodated within existing meaning structures – prompts a process of critical reflection, rational discourse with others, and ultimately a revision of the underlying perspective.

The result is not merely new knowledge but a genuinely different way of making meaning, which Mezirow saw as the foundation of emancipatory education. For the CUBE evaluation, Transformative Learning Theory provides the conceptual framework for assessing the deepest potential impacts of the project's activities: changes not just in what participants know or can do, but in how they understand their own identities, capabilities, and possibilities in relation to the labour market.

The transnational dimension of CUBE's activities is particularly significant from a transformative perspective, as encounters with radically different cultural approaches to work, creativity, and professional identity can serve as powerful disorienting dilemmas that catalyse perspective transformation. The evaluation gathered specific evidence for transformative learning through narrative prompts in post-activity reflection instruments and through the Online Group Reflection sessions (T4.4), which were specifically designed to create the conditions for critical dialogue about learning experiences and their meaning.

4.2 Evaluation 2a: Capacity Building Workshop (D3.1)

The Capacity Building Workshop (CBW, D3.1) was a five-day residential activity bringing together participants from all 7 partner countries. Hosted by SYL in Amman, Jordan in October 2024, the CBW provided an intensive introduction to the CUBE project's creative collaboration methodology for youth workers and youth organisation staff. The workshop combined skills training, intercultural exchange, peer learning, and collaborative curriculum development.

Key Findings – CBW

Pre-post competence assessments showed significant learning gains across all targeted dimensions. The most substantial gains were recorded in Facilitation Skills (mean delta +1.4), Creative Methodology Design (+1.3), and Intercultural Communication (+1.1). Overall satisfaction was 4.5/5.0. Qualitative feedback highlighted the value of learning from peers across different national contexts, with participants from Lebanon and Egypt specifically noting that the Jordanian context prompted reflections on shared and divergent challenges in youth employment across the MENA region.

4.3 Evaluation 2b: Job Shadowing Programme (D3.2)

The Job Shadowing programme (D3.2) placed young adults in professional host organisation, enabling them to observe and engage with professional practice in fields relevant to their career development. Host organisations were drawn from the creative industries, social enterprise, and youth services sectors in Greece, Germany, and Liechtenstein. The programme was coordinated and hosted by EQUALINE.

Key Findings – Job Shadowing T

The Job Shadowing programme produced the strongest competence development outcomes of any CUBE activity, with 91% of participants reporting significant changes in their professional outlook and career plans following their placement. Mean competence gains of +1.6 (on a 5-point scale) were recorded for Professional Network Awareness, +1.5 for Career Planning Skills, and +1.4 for Cross-Cultural Professional Competence.

4.4 Evaluation 2c: Eight National Workshops (D3.3)

Eight national workshops were implemented in each of the 7 partner countries (with Greece hosting two due to coordinator and partner Fifty-Fifty), reaching the targeted number of young participants in total. The workshops applied adapted versions of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology to local youth employment contexts, facilitated by trained practitioners from the CUBE consortium who had completed the Capacity Building Workshop. Each workshop was 1 day in duration and focused on a locally relevant employability theme selected by the partner organisation in consultation with national youth stakeholders.

Total participants across all eight national workshops reached exceeded the target of 200. Mean satisfaction across all workshops was 4.49/5.0.

Thematic analysis of participant feedback across workshops revealed three recurring strengths:

the participatory facilitation approach,
the relevance of the creative methodology to participants' professional interests,
and the quality of peer learning among participants.

Three recurring areas for improvement were identified: the workshops were felt to be too short by a significant minority of participants (31%); more practical, "take-away" tools for applying learning were requested; and participants wanted stronger connections to specific employer networks and job market information.

Country	Partner	Theme	Satisfaction /5
Morocco	MFF	Creative Entrepreneurship	4.4
Lebanon	LDN	Youth Employment in Crisis Contexts	4.6
Jordan	SYL	Green Economy & Youth Skills	4.5
Egypt	OMA	Digital Creative Industries	4.3
Germany	uDevelop	Social Innovation & Employability	4.5
Liechtenstein	CYA	Intercultural Creative Practice	4.7
Greece (1)	EQUALINE	Youth Entrepreneurship Ecosystems	4.4
Greece (2)	Fifty-Fifty	Gender & Creative Employment	4.5

5. Evaluation Report 3: Dissemination Campaign (D4.1, D4.2, Multiplier Events)

5.1 Theoretical Framework: Dissemination and Knowledge Transfer

The evaluation of dissemination activities requires a theoretical framework that goes beyond simply counting outputs (publications produced, events held, people reached) to ask more fundamental questions about whether and how knowledge and innovation are actually transferred from the project to external audiences and whether they produce changes in awareness, understanding, attitude, or practice. This section draws on three theoretical traditions that together provide a robust framework for evaluating CUBE's dissemination work: Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations theory, knowledge brokering theory, and the distinction between dissemination, exploitation, and mainstreaming in Erasmus+ programme logic.

Rogers' Diffusion of Innovations Theory

Everett Rogers' (1962, 2003) Diffusion of Innovations theory is the most widely cited framework for understanding how new ideas, practices, and technologies spread through social systems. Rogers identified five key factors that influence the rate of adoption of an innovation: relative advantage (the degree to which the innovation is perceived as better than what it replaces); compatibility (the degree to which it is consistent with existing values, experiences, and needs); complexity (the degree to which it is perceived as difficult to understand and use); trialability (the degree to which it can be experimented with on a limited basis); and observability (the degree to which the results of an innovation are visible to others). He also identified five categories of adopters – Innovators, Early Adopters, Early Majority, Late Majority, and Laggards – distributed along a classic S-curve of adoption over time.

For the CUBE evaluation, Rogers' framework informs both the design and the assessment of dissemination activities. Effective dissemination should not simply broadcast information about the project's outputs but should actively address the five adoption factors: demonstrating the relative advantage of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology over existing approaches; showing its compatibility with the values and practices of youth work organisations; reducing perceived complexity through accessible materials and demonstration events; enabling trialability by providing freely downloadable tools and facilitation guides; and increasing observability through case studies, participant testimonials, and documented outcomes. The evaluation assessed dissemination activities against each of these criteria, providing a more nuanced picture of dissemination effectiveness than simple reach metrics can offer.

Knowledge Brokering Theory

Knowledge brokering theory, developed across research utilisation, science-policy, and development studies traditions (Ward et al., 2009; Lomas, 2007), addresses the processes by which knowledge produced in one context is made accessible and useful in another. A knowledge broker is an individual or organisation that acts as an intermediary, translating between knowledge producers (in this case, the CUBE project consortium) and knowledge users (the wider youth work sector, employers, policymakers, and young people themselves). Key brokering functions include linkage (connecting knowledge producers and users), synthesis (translating and summarising knowledge in accessible forms), and capacity development (building users' ability to engage with and apply new knowledge).

This framework is particularly relevant for evaluating Multiplier Events, which are explicitly designed to function as knowledge brokering occasions: bringing together project practitioners and external stakeholders to facilitate knowledge transfer in a structured, interactive setting. The evaluation assessed Multiplier Events not simply as dissemination outputs but as knowledge brokering interventions, examining the degree to which they successfully performed linkage, synthesis, and capacity development functions for their participants.

Dissemination, Exploitation and Mainstreaming

The Erasmus+ programme framework distinguishes between three related but distinct processes: dissemination (making results visible and accessible to relevant audiences), exploitation (using project results to generate value, whether social, educational, or economic), and mainstreaming (incorporating project results into mainstream policies, systems, and practices). Each requires different strategies, different target audiences, and different success indicators. Many projects conflate these three processes, treating any public communication activity as "dissemination" and any downstream use of results as "exploitation," without attending to the different mechanisms and conditions required for each. The CUBE evaluation framework explicitly distinguishes between these three processes and assesses each domain of the dissemination campaign against the specific criteria appropriate to it.

5.2 Dissemination Plan (D4.1) – Assessment

The CUBE Dissemination and Communication Plan (D4.1) established the strategic framework for all dissemination activities, including target audiences, communication channels, messages, and responsibilities. The Plan was developed by uDevelop in coordination with all partners and approved in Month 3 of the project. The evaluation assessed the quality of the Plan as a strategic document and its implementation fidelity.

The Plan was assessed as comprehensive, realistic, and well-aligned with the project's Theory of Change. It correctly identified the three primary target audience segments (youth workers and trainers, young people in partner countries, and policymakers and employers) and prescribed differentiated communication approaches for each. Implementation fidelity was high: 87% of planned dissemination actions were implemented as described, with minor deviations relating primarily to timing adjustments and the substitution of digital for in-person activities in two cases.

5.3 Project Website (D4.2) – Assessment

All website targets were exceeded. The average session duration of 3 minutes 42 seconds indicates genuine engagement with content rather than brief visits, supporting the view that the website is functioning effectively as a knowledge resource rather than merely a visibility instrument.

5.4 Multiplier Events – Assessment

8 Multiplier Events were held across the 7 partner countries between October 2025 and February 2026, collectively reaching the targeted direct participants drawn from youth organisations, educational institutions, employers, and local authorities. Each event combined presentations of project findings, demonstrations of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology, and structured networking sessions.

Post-event surveys indicated that 78% of Multiplier Event participants reported learning something new about youth employability approaches, 65% expressed intent to explore the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology further for use in their own organisations, and 34% had concrete plans for implementing or adapting project tools within six months of the event. These figures indicate effective knowledge brokering performance, with the events successfully performing both linkage and capacity development functions.

6. Evaluation Report 4: Project Management and Quality Assurance (WPI)

6.1 Theoretical Framework: Quality Assurance in Transnational Projects

Quality assurance in transnational non-formal education projects presents a distinctive set of theoretical and practical challenges that standard quality management frameworks – developed primarily for manufacturing, commercial services, or large-scale formal education systems – do not adequately address. This section draws on three theoretical traditions that together provide a more contextually appropriate framework: the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, Total Quality Management (TQM) principles adapted to non-profit contexts, and scholarship on the specific challenges of quality assurance across different national and cultural contexts.

The PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) Cycle

The PDCA cycle, originally developed by Shewhart (1939) and popularised by Deming (1986) in the context of industrial quality management, provides the foundational logic for iterative quality improvement. In the Plan phase, specific improvement objectives are set, processes are defined, and resources are allocated. In the Do phase, the plan is implemented, typically on a small scale initially. In the Check (or Study) phase, the results of the implementation are measured and compared against the original objectives, identifying gaps and understanding their causes. In the Act phase, the learnings from the Check phase are incorporated into revised plans and procedures, which then feed into the next Plan phase, creating a continuous improvement loop. Applied to transnational project management, the PDCA cycle suggests that quality cannot be achieved through upfront planning alone but requires systematic monitoring of implementation, honest assessment of deviations from plan, and structured processes for incorporating lessons into ongoing management practice.

The CUBE project built this logic into its management framework through: quarterly partner reporting against a standardised indicator framework (Plan/Check); regular Transnational Partner Meetings with dedicated reflection and learning agenda items (Check/Act); a structured mid-term evaluation conducted by LDN (Check); and documented management adaptations following each reflection cycle (Act). This approach is consistent with the most effective practice in Erasmus+ project management identified in the European Commission's own quality assessments.

Total Quality Management in Non-Profit Contexts

Total Quality Management (TQM), as articulated by Juran (1988) and Deming (1986), is a management philosophy that places quality at the centre of all organisational activities, viewing quality not as a function of a dedicated quality department but as the responsibility of every person and process in the organisation. Key TQM principles include: customer focus (understanding and meeting the needs of those served); leadership commitment (quality must be championed at the top of the organisation); employee involvement (all staff contribute to quality improvement); process approach (quality outcomes result from well-managed processes, not just individual effort); evidence-based decision-making; and supplier/partner relationship management. The application of TQM principles to non-profit and voluntary sector organisations requires significant adaptation. The "customer" in non-formal education is complex and multiple – participants, funders, partner organisations, the community – and their needs and expectations may be in tension. "Employee involvement" in volunteer-led organisations with temporary project

structures differs fundamentally from its meaning in stable commercial organisations. And the emphasis on standardisation and process control in classical TQM can conflict with the flexibility, responsiveness, and creativity that characterise effective youth work practice. The CUBE quality assurance framework navigated these tensions by maintaining clear minimum standards for documentation and reporting while preserving partner autonomy in implementation approach, and by treating quality not as conformance to a predetermined specification but as the continuous pursuit of better outcomes for participants. Cross-National Quality Assurance Challenges Scholarship on transnational development and education projects (Morgan, 2013; Boud & Falchikov, 2007) consistently identifies cross-national cultural variation as one of the most significant sources of quality risk in international collaborations. Partners from different national contexts bring different understandings of what constitutes high-quality work, different norms for communication and decision-making, different institutional capacities for data collection and reporting, and different relationships to external accountability requirements. These differences, if unmanaged, can undermine the coherence of evaluation data, the comparability of outcomes across partner countries, and the collaborative relationships on which project quality depends. The CUBE project addressed these challenges through several mechanisms: a shared evaluation framework with clear operational definitions of all indicators; a training programme for partner evaluation focal points; regular peer review of partner outputs; and a cultural sensitivity protocol for evaluation instruments that required all survey and observation tools to be reviewed by local partners for cultural appropriateness before deployment. Despite these measures, some cross national variation in data quality and reporting completeness remained, and the evaluation results should be interpreted with awareness that the richness and reliability of evidence varied somewhat across partner countries.

6.2 Management Structure and Governance

The project was coordinated by EQUALINE (Greece), which held responsibility for overall project management, financial oversight, and communication with EACEA. The project governance structure comprised a Steering Committee (all partners, meeting at each Transnational Partner Meeting), a Management Team (all PPs), and work package task forces for each of the four WPs. Decision-making followed a consensus-first protocol, with voting reserved for decisions where consensus could not be reached within a defined timeframe.

6.3 Findings and Conclusions

The project management and quality assurance framework functioned effectively throughout the project period. EQUALINE's coordination was consistently evaluated positively by partners, with the structured communication protocols and clear division of responsibilities cited as particular strengths. The two late deliverables (D3.3 and D4.2) were attributable to external factors (partner capacity challenges related to the Lebanese economic situation) rather than management failures, and mitigation measures were applied effectively. The one deliverable requiring major revision (D2.4, first draft) was improved substantially through the revision process, demonstrating that the quality assurance mechanism was working as intended. The partnership governance structure effectively balanced the efficiency of centralised coordination with the participation and ownership of all partners. The consensus-based decision-making protocol proved appropriate for the scale and nature of the collaboration, though it occasionally slowed decision-making in time-sensitive situations. For future projects of similar complexity, the evaluation recommends the development of a clear escalation protocol for decisions requiring rapid resolution.

7. Evaluation Report 5: Online Group Reflections (T4.4)

7.1 Theoretical Framework: Reflective Practice and Online Group Learning

The Online Group Reflection sessions (T4.4) represent one of the most theoretically interesting elements of the CUBE evaluation framework. Unlike the other four evaluation domains, which primarily assess discrete activities, the Online Group Reflections function simultaneously as an evaluation method and as a learning intervention in their own right: by creating structured opportunities for graduates of CUBE activities to reflect collectively on their learning, they both generate evaluation data about learning transfer and contribute to that transfer. This dual function requires a theoretical framework that addresses both the nature of reflective practice and the specific affordances and limitations of online group learning environments. Schön's Reflective Practitioner Model Donald Schön's (1983) concept of the reflective practitioner has become foundational in professional education, teacher training, and increasingly in non-formal education and youth work. Schön distinguished between two forms of professional reflection: reflection-in-action, the tacit, real-time adjustment that skilled practitioners make during the course of their work (what he described as "thinking on your feet"), and reflection-on-action, the more deliberate, retrospective analysis of practice that occurs after the event and enables practitioners to learn from experience in a more systematic way. He argued that technical rationality – the application of predetermined rules and procedures – is inadequate for the complex, uncertain, value-laden problems that characterise professional practice, and that what professional expertise actually consists of is the capacity for artful improvisation grounded in deep tacit knowledge, developed through reflective experience.

The CUBE Online Group Reflection sessions were explicitly designed to create structured occasions for reflection-on-action: bringing together participants from different CUBE activities six months after their completion to revisit their learning experiences, assess what they had actually transferred to their professional practice, and identify the factors that had facilitated or hindered that transfer. The structured protocol for these sessions drew on Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988), a widely used operationalisation of Schön's framework that guides practitioners through six stages: Description (what happened?), Feelings (what were you thinking and feeling?), Evaluation (what was good and bad about the experience?), Analysis (what sense can you make of the situation?), Conclusion (what else could you have done?), and Action Plan (if it arose again, what would you do?).

Wenger's Communities of Practice Theory

Etienne Wenger's (1998) theory of Communities of Practice (CoPs) offers a social learning perspective that complements Schön's focus on individual reflection. Wenger argued that learning is fundamentally a social process, occurring through participation in shared practice rather than through individual cognitive activity, and that the primary unit of analysis for understanding professional learning is not the individual but the community of practitioners who share a domain of activity, a shared practice, and a sense of collective identity. Key mechanisms of learning in CoPs include mutual engagement (working alongside others on shared tasks), joint enterprise (collectively negotiating what the community is about and what it is trying to achieve), and shared repertoire (developing a common stock of routines, vocabularies, tools, and stories).

The CUBE network has the potential to function as a distributed Community of Practice for non formal education practitioners across the Euro-Mediterranean region, and the Online Group Reflection sessions can be understood as designed occasions for the three mechanisms of CoP learning to operate: participants engage mutually in collaborative reflection, they negotiate their shared understanding of the CUBE project's contribution to their practice, and they add to a growing shared repertoire of tools, insights, and professional stories. The evaluation assessed the degree to which the sessions succeeded in activating these mechanisms, looking not just at the individual learning outcomes of participants but at the relational and collective dynamics of the reflection process.

Online Group Learning: Affordances and Limitations

The shift to online delivery for the Group Reflection sessions was partly a practical choice (participants were distributed across six countries) and partly a pedagogically informed one (online environments can support certain forms of reflective practice particularly well). Research on online collaborative learning (Garrison & Anderson, 2003; Salmon, 2011) identifies several affordances of synchronous online group learning relevant to CUBE's context: the removal of geographical barriers enabling transnational participation; the reduced cost enabling more frequent interaction; the availability of digital tools for structured collaboration (shared documents, virtual whiteboards, breakout rooms); and for some participants, the psychological distance of online interaction which can support more candid self-disclosure in reflective contexts. Significant limitations are also documented, however, including reduced social cue availability, digital fatigue, unequal access to stable high-quality internet connections, and the challenges of facilitating genuinely dialogic group processes through screen-mediated interaction.

7.2 Session Design and Implementation

Three Online Group Reflection sessions were implemented. Participants completed a preparatory self-reflection template in the week before each session.

7.3 Key Findings

Analysis of session transcripts and facilitator observation notes identified five major themes across the three sessions. First, all participants reported some degree of sustained learning transfer, with the most commonly applied skills being facilitation techniques (74% of participants), collaborative problem-solving approaches (68%), and intercultural communication strategies (65%). Second, participants identified support from their home organisations as the critical factor enabling or constraining transfer, with those in more flexible and innovative organisations reporting significantly higher transfer rates. Third, the transnational dimension of the CUBE experience was consistently identified as its most distinctive and valued feature – encountering peers from different national contexts had expanded participants' professional imagination in ways that purely national activities could not have achieved. Fourth, participants reported the Online Reflection sessions themselves as a valuable learning experience, not merely a data collection exercise, suggesting that the sessions were successfully functioning as both. Fifth, several participants articulated genuine perspective transformations consistent with Mezirow's framework, describing fundamental shifts in how they understood their own professional identities and possibilities. One significant limitation of the sessions was noted: participants from Lebanon and Morocco reported persistent connectivity challenges that intermittently disrupted their participation in Sessions 1 and 2. This technical barrier, while mitigated by the facilitators through flexible session management, represents a structural inequity in online transnational activities that future projects should more proactively address through, for example, providing data allowances, establishing offline participation options, or scheduling sessions at times that minimise connectivity pressure.

8. Cross-Cutting Analysis: Target Groups, Stakeholders and Partnership

8.1 Theoretical Framework: Stakeholder Analysis and Partnership Evaluation

The evaluation of a transnational partnership project requires theoretical resources that can illuminate not only what the project achieved for its intended direct beneficiaries, but also the dynamics of the partnership itself – as both an enabling condition for project quality and as an output in its own right (in the sense that well-functioning partnerships generate social capital and collaborative capacity that extends beyond any single project). This section draws on Freeman's stakeholder theory, Putnam's social capital theory, and partnership quality frameworks from the development studies literature.

Freeman's Stakeholder Theory

R. Edward Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, originally developed in the context of strategic business management, argues that organisations cannot be understood or evaluated solely in relation to their owners or primary clients but must be understood in relation to all groups that have a stake in the organisation's activities – those who affect or are affected by the organisation's pursuit of its goals. Freeman identified a range of stakeholder groups (employees, customers, suppliers, communities, governments) and argued that attention to stakeholder interests is not merely an ethical obligation but a practical necessity for organisational effectiveness and legitimacy. Applied to the CUBE project evaluation, stakeholder theory reframes the evaluation question from "did the project achieve its objectives?" to "for whom did the project create or destroy value, and through what processes?" This broader framing reveals that the project served multiple stakeholder groups with different interests and expectations: direct participants (young people), who sought competence development and employment opportunities; partner organisations, which sought to develop their own capacities and reputations; funders (the European Commission/EACEA), which sought effective use of public resources and contribution to European Youth Goals; national youth sectors in each partner country, which might benefit from the transfer of project methodologies; and employers in partner countries, who might benefit from the enhanced employability of CUBE graduates. The evaluation gathered evidence from all these stakeholder groups, though with varying intensity, and the cross-cutting analysis presented here attempts to synthesise findings across stakeholder perspectives.

Putnam's Social Capital Theory

Robert Putnam's (2000) social capital theory, drawing on earlier work by Coleman (1988) and Bourdieu (1986), distinguishes between bonding social capital (the dense networks of trust and reciprocity within closely knit groups, such as families, ethnic communities, or close-knit organisational teams), bridging social capital (the more diffuse connections across diverse groups that facilitate information exchange, resource sharing, and collective action across social boundaries), and linking social capital (the connections between individuals or groups in different positions in the social hierarchy, particularly connections between civil society actors and formal institutions of power). Transnational youth work projects like CUBE are particularly interesting from a social capital perspective because they are explicitly designed to generate bridging social capital across national, cultural, and institutional boundaries. The connections formed between young people from

Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Germany, Greece, and Liechtenstein through CUBE activities have the potential to create precisely the kind of cross-boundary networks that Putnam argues are most valuable for social cohesion, innovation, and democratic resilience. The evaluation assessed the social capital created by CUBE activities by examining the nature and density of new professional relationships formed during project activities, and their reported persistence and productive use in the months following activity completion.

Partnership Quality Frameworks

The research literature on international development partnerships (Lister, 2000; Fowler, 2000) and Erasmus+ project partnerships (Pantić & Florian, 2015) has identified a consistent set of factors associated with high-quality, high-impact transnational collaborations: shared values and vision; complementary expertise; clear and equitable division of roles and responsibilities; trust and mutual respect; effective communication systems; shared decision-making processes; and attention to power dynamics, particularly North-South or large-small organisation imbalances. The evaluation gathered data on each of these dimensions through partner surveys conducted at three points during the project period.

8.2 Social Capital Assessment

Analysis of participant network surveys conducted at 6-month follow-up revealed significant bridging social capital creation. Of the total number of national workshop participants surveyed, 61% reported maintaining professional contact with at least one participant they had met through CUBE activities, and 23% reported a professional collaboration or co-project initiated through CUBE connections. Among Job Shadowing participants, 78% reported maintaining contact with their host organisation, and 44% reported ongoing professional relationship with their host supervisor. Among CBW participants, 88% reported ongoing professional contact with at least two peers from other countries, representing the strongest cross-national network formation of any activity. The partnership itself demonstrated strong bonding social capital, with partner satisfaction surveys showing high levels of trust (mean 4.5/5.0), mutual respect (4.6/5.0), and communication quality (4.3/5.0).

The transnational dimension of the partnership created bridging capital across national contexts, though the power dynamics between European partners (Germany, Greece, Liechtenstein) and MENA partners (Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco) were consistently noted in qualitative feedback as requiring ongoing attention, particularly in relation to resource allocation, decision making authority, and the valuing of different types of expertise and knowledge.

9. Overall Impact Assessment

9.1 Theoretical Framework: Impact Assessment in Youth Work

The assessment of impact in non-formal youth work interventions is methodologically challenging and theoretically contested. This section outlines the theoretical framework that guided CUBE's impact assessment, drawing on the distinction between outputs, outcomes, and impact; the attribution versus contribution debate; Most Significant Change methodology; and the specific challenges of evaluating non-formal education impact.

Outputs, Outcomes, and Impact

The terminology of outputs, outcomes, and impact is used inconsistently across the evaluation literature and in programme management practice, a source of considerable confusion. For the purposes of the CUBE evaluation, these terms are defined as follows. Outputs are the direct, tangible products of project activities: training sessions delivered, participants trained, publications produced, websites launched. They are fully under the control of the project team and verifiable through straightforward documentary evidence. Outcomes are the changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, relationships, or conditions that result from participation in project activities or engagement with project outputs. They are the most important category from the perspective of the project's intended purpose, but they are more difficult to measure and are only partly under the project's control, since they depend on participants' motivation, context, and support as well as on the quality of the activities themselves. Impact refers to the longer-term, broader changes in the lives of individuals, communities, or systems that can be attributed to or associated with project outcomes. Impact is the hardest category to measure, requires the longest timeframe to observe, and is the most difficult to attribute to any specific intervention. This distinction is important not merely as an academic taxonomy but as a practical guide to evaluation design. Too many project evaluations conflate outputs and outcomes – counting participants and publications as evidence of impact – which both overstates the project's contribution and fails to generate learning about whether and how the activities actually produced the changes they were designed to produce. The CUBE evaluation framework was explicitly designed to distinguish between and gather evidence at all three levels, with the honest recognition that impact evidence at the level of employment outcomes and systemic change would be limited within the project's two-year timeframe.

Attribution versus Contribution

One of the most persistent methodological challenges in non-formal education evaluation is the attribution problem: the difficulty of establishing a causal link between a project intervention and an observed outcome or impact, given that multiple factors – including other programmes, social relationships, personal characteristics, and broader social and economic trends – simultaneously influence the outcomes being measured. Classical experimental and quasi-experimental evaluation designs attempt to solve the attribution problem through control group comparisons, but these designs are rarely feasible in small-scale non-formal education projects, and their application to the complex, value-laden outcomes of youth work raises significant ethical and practical problems. The dominant response to the attribution problem in the development evaluation literature is the shift from attribution to contribution analysis (Mayne, 2012). Rather than attempting to prove that

a project caused an outcome, contribution analysis asks what role the project played in producing an outcome, given a plausible intervention logic and evidence for the specific causal links in that logic. This approach acknowledges that most outcomes result from multiple contributing factors and that honest evaluation involves reconstructing the causal story with appropriate epistemic humility rather than claiming exclusive credit for observable changes. The CUBE evaluation's use of Theory of Change as an organising framework is consistent with this contribution logic: the evaluation traces the evidence for each link in the ToC causal chain rather than attempting to establish the project as the sole or primary cause of the outcomes documented.

Most Significant Change Methodology

Most Significant Change (MSC) methodology, developed by Davies and Dart (2005) in the international development context, is a participatory evaluation approach that collects stories of significant change from beneficiaries and stakeholders, then involves panels of stakeholders in selecting and interpreting the most significant of these stories. MSC is particularly valuable for capturing unanticipated outcomes – changes that were not in the project's original objectives but that beneficiaries and stakeholders regard as the most important things the project produced – and for giving voice to beneficiary perspectives in the interpretive phase of evaluation, rather than having external evaluators decide what counts as significant. Elements of the MSC approach were incorporated into the CUBE evaluation through the Online Group Reflection sessions (T4.4), which included a structured activity inviting participants to identify and narrate the single most significant change in their professional practice or personal development that they attributed to their CUBE experience. These MSC stories were then shared across the reflection group and rated for significance by peers, generating both data and discussion about the nature and distribution of project impact. The most significant change stories collected through this process are summarised in Section 9.2 below.

Evaluating Non-Formal Education Impact

The evaluation of non-formal education impact faces a number of specific challenges that compound the general difficulties of outcome and impact assessment in complex social interventions. The short-term, episodic nature of many non-formal learning activities makes it difficult to achieve the depth of learning change associated with longer-term formal education. The absence of formal recognition and certification for non-formal learning means that its outcomes may not be visible in the labour market data (job attainment, promotion, salary) typically used to measure education and training returns. The highly contextualised, experiential nature of non-formal learning means that learning outcomes resist standardised measurement and may only be apparent through qualitative and narrative evidence. And the value commitment of non-formal education to transformation, empowerment, and social justice means that the most important outcomes may be precisely those that are hardest to quantify – changes in self-concept, in political consciousness, in relational capacity, and in the ability to navigate and challenge structural barriers to inclusion and employment.

10. Conclusions and Recommendations

10.1 Theoretical Synthesis

The findings presented in this evaluation handbook can be synthesised through the theoretical frameworks introduced in earlier sections into a coherent account of how and why the CUBE project produced the outcomes and impacts it did. This synthesis is offered not merely as an academic exercise but as a practical contribution to understanding what makes transnational non-formal education projects effective, for the benefit of practitioners, funders, and policymakers who might learn from the CUBE experience. Reading the findings through Kirkpatrick's four levels, the evidence shows strong performance at Levels 1 and 2 (satisfaction and learning), moderate performance at Level 3 (behaviour/transfer), and promising but limited evidence at Level 4 (results/impact). This pattern is consistent with the research literature on short-term non-formal education programmes, which consistently shows that satisfaction and immediate learning are achievable and measurable but that sustained behaviour change and system-level impact require longer timeframes, ongoing support structures, and enabling organisational and policy environments. The CUBE project's investment in post-activity follow-up through the Online Group Reflection sessions (T4.4) represents a well-grounded attempt to extend the project's influence on Level 3 outcomes, and the data suggest this investment yielded returns. The CIPP framework highlights the importance of contextual factors in shaping the uneven distribution of outcomes across partner countries. The evaluation found that participants from contexts with stronger institutional support for non-formal learning (Germany, Liechtenstein, Greece) showed somewhat higher levels of learning transfer than participants from contexts where non-formal learning is less institutionally recognised (Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco). This finding does not reflect any difference in the quality of the activities or the learning motivation of participants – indeed, qualitative data suggest that participants from more challenging contexts were often more intensely motivated – but rather the differential availability of the enabling conditions (organisational support, time, resources) required to apply learning in practice. This finding has important implications for project design: the CIPP framework suggests that future projects should invest more explicitly in addressing contextual constraints on transfer, rather than assuming that well-designed activities automatically translate into equivalent outcomes regardless of context. The realist evaluation lens reveals that the most impactful mechanism across all CUBE activities was not any specific technique or content but rather the quality of the transnational encounter itself – the experience of working alongside peers from different national, cultural, and professional contexts in a purposeful, facilitated learning environment. This mechanism appears to have activated participants' agency, expanded their professional horizons, and built the kind of bridging social capital that Putnam's framework identifies as most valuable for innovation and social cohesion. This finding suggests that the transnational dimension of Erasmus+ projects is not merely a funding eligibility criterion but a genuinely productive pedagogical feature that should be maximised rather than merely satisfied. The Theory of Change evaluation revealed that most of the critical assumptions underpinning the CUBE ToC were substantially validated by the evidence. Participants did develop the competences targeted; learning did transfer to professional behaviour for a significant majority; transnational collaboration did add value beyond national activities; and partner organisations did demonstrate increased capacity for this kind of work. The most significant gap between assumption and evidence concerned employer engagement: the ToC assumed that employers in partner countries would recognise and value the non-formal learning credentials and competences developed through CUBE activities, but the evidence suggests that this assumption holds more strongly in European contexts (Germany, Greece) than in MENA contexts, where formal credentials continue to dominate employer selection processes and non-formal learning is less institutionally visible.

The social capital analysis reveals that CUBE created substantial bridging capital across national contexts, particularly through the CBW and Job Shadowing activities. Wenger's Communities of Practice framework suggests that this bridging capital has the potential to evolve into a genuine transnational Community of Practice for creative youth employability work – but only if the relational infrastructure built during the project is actively maintained beyond the funding period. The evidence from the Online Group Reflection sessions is cautiously optimistic: participants are maintaining connections and initiating collaborations, but without structural support (a shared platform, regular touchpoints, opportunities for joint project development) the community risks fragmentation. The sustainability plan (D4.4, OMA) must address this challenge directly. Finally, the cross-national quality assurance framework demonstrated that high-quality, consistent evaluation is achievable in transnational projects, but requires significant investment in evaluator capacity building, shared instrument development, and ongoing quality assurance of the evaluation process itself. The CUBE evaluation team's experience suggests that the evaluation function in Erasmus+ projects is systematically under-resourced relative to its importance, and that dedicating a full work package and named lead organisation to evaluation (as in the CUBE structure) is a genuinely better model than treating evaluation as a minor add-on to project management.

10.2 Overall Assessment

Based on the totality of evidence gathered across all five evaluation domains, the CUBE project is assessed as having achieved its objectives to a high degree. All quantitative targets were met or exceeded. The quality of learning activities was consistently high across partner countries. The dissemination campaign achieved strong reach and demonstrated effective knowledge brokering. Project management was conducted with professionalism and transparency. The Online Group Reflection sessions successfully supported learning transfer and generated valuable impact evidence. The partnership functioned cohesively and generated institutional learning that will outlast the project period. The most significant achievements of the project are: (1) the development and validation of the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology as a replicable, transferable approach to youth employability in diverse cultural contexts; (2) the generation of measurable competence development outcomes for 297 direct participants; (3) the creation of a transnational network of non-formal education practitioners that is demonstrably generating professional collaborations and innovations beyond the project itself; and (4) the production of a comprehensive, theoretically grounded evaluation framework that is available as a public resource for the broader field.

10.3 Recommendations

Recommendations for Learning Activities

- R1: Extend the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology to longer-format (5-day) delivery to enable deeper learning and greater competence consolidation, based on participant requests across multiple activities.
- R2: Develop a stronger post-activity learning transfer support structure, including alumni coaching sessions and an online peer support platform, to sustain competence application between project activities.
- R3: Invest in employer engagement strategies in MENA partner contexts to increase the recognition and uptake of non-formal learning credentials in recruitment and promotion processes.
- R4: Develop country-specific contextualisation guides for the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology, drawing on the pilot evaluation findings and subsequent national implementation experience. Recommendations for Dissemination and Exploitation
- R5: Develop a dedicated exploitation strategy for the Creative Collaboration Summit methodology, including licensing arrangements, facilitator certification, and pricing models that balance accessibility with sustainability.
- R6: Establish a permanent digital community platform for the CUBE alumni network, with dedicated resources for ongoing professional development and project collaboration.
- R7: Produce a practitioner-oriented guide to the CUBE evaluation framework, making the theoretical approach and practical instruments accessible to youth workers without specialised evaluation training.

Recommendations for Project Management

- R8: Develop a clear escalation protocol for time-sensitive decisions to supplement the consensus-based governance model, preventing management delays in urgent situations.
- R9: Build greater flexibility into partner reporting requirements to accommodate the varying institutional capacities of partners in different national contexts, while maintaining the minimum data quality standards necessary for robust evaluation.
- R10: Invest in structured knowledge management practices throughout future projects, ensuring that learning from implementation is systematically captured and made accessible to the whole partnership rather than residing with individual partner staff.

Recommendations for Evaluation

- R11: Incorporate employer perspectives more systematically in future evaluations through dedicated employer satisfaction surveys and labour market tracking of participants at 12-month follow-up.
- R12: Address digital connectivity inequalities as a structural challenge in online evaluation activities, providing data allowances, offline participation options, or time adjustments to ensure equitable participation from all partner country contexts.
- R13: Build MSC methodology more explicitly into future evaluation frameworks, dedicating structured time in each learning activity for beneficiary-led impact storytelling as a complement to quantitative assessment. Recommendations for Future Projects
- R14: Design future transnational projects to explicitly maximise the transnational encounter mechanism identified by this evaluation as the primary driver of transformative learning, rather than treating transnationality as a logistical arrangement.
- R15: Address power dynamics in transnational partnerships more explicitly through dedicated partnership quality protocols, including regular structured conversations about equity, resource allocation, and the valuing of different types of expertise.
- R16: Build longer-term sustainability planning into project design from the outset, including post-funding community maintenance structures, methodology licensing models, and integration of outputs into partner organisations' regular programmes.
- R17: Advocate at policy level for improved formal recognition of non-formal learning credentials in partner country employment systems, engaging national authorities and employers in conversations about the value and validity of non-formal competence certification.

Annex A: Evaluation Tools

A.1 Pre- and Post-Activity Competence Self-Assessment Survey

The following 12-item survey was administered to participants before and after each learning activity. Participants rated their competence on a 5-point scale (1 = I have no experience with this; 5 = I am very confident and skilled in this).

Item No.	Competence Statement	Scale
1	I can apply creative problem-solving techniques to professional challenges.	1-5
2	I can collaborate effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds.	1-5
3	I can facilitate group creative processes and ideation sessions.	1-5
4	I can give and receive constructive peer feedback on creative work.	1-5
5	I understand key principles of entrepreneurial mindset and can apply them.	1-5
6	I can adapt my communication style to different intercultural contexts.	1-5
7	I can design and prototype a creative solution to a defined problem.	1-5
8	I regularly reflect on my professional practice and identify learning.	1-5
9	I am confident in using digital tools for collaborative work.	1-5
10	I can identify and articulate my employability strengths and development areas.	1-5
11	I can plan and facilitate a workshop or group learning session.	1-5
12	I can build and maintain professional relationships across cultural and national boundaries.	1-5

A.2 Activity Satisfaction Survey

Administered at the end of each activity. Items rated 1-5 (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree), plus open-ended questions.

Item	Question
S1	The activity was relevant to my professional development needs.
S2	The facilitation was of high quality.
S3	The learning materials were useful and well-designed.
S4	The group dynamics supported my learning.
S5	The transnational dimension added value to my learning.
S6	The logistics and organisation of the activity were satisfactory.
S7	I would recommend this activity to a colleague.
S8	Overall, I am satisfied with this activity.

Open-ended questions: (a) What was the most valuable aspect of this activity for you? (b) What would you change or improve? (c) What specific action do you plan to take following this activity?

A.3 Partner Organisation Quality Survey

Administered to partner representatives at each Transnational Partner Meeting (TPM). Items rated 1–5.

Item	Statement
PQ1	The coordination by EQUALINE is effective and responsive.
PQ2	Communication within the partnership is clear and timely.
PQ3	Decision-making processes are fair and inclusive.
PQ4	My organisation's contributions are valued by the partnership.
PQ5	The project is on track to achieve its objectives.
PQ6	I am satisfied with the quality of the deliverables produced so far.
PQ7	The partnership is managing risks and challenges effectively.
PQ8	I would recommend partnering with this consortium in a future project.

A.4 Online Group Reflection Session Protocol

Each 3-hour Online Group Reflection session followed this structured protocol:

- **Welcome and check-in round (15 minutes):** Participants share one word describing their current relationship to their CUBE learning.
- **Individual reflection (20 minutes):** Participants complete the preparatory reflection template independently (pre-submitted version reviewed or completed in session).
- **Small group sharing (40 minutes):** Groups of 3–4 share reflections on professional application of CUBE learning; facilitator takes observational notes.
- **Most Significant Change stories (30 minutes):** Each participant identifies their single most significant change; stories shared in plenary.
- **Collective significance rating (20 minutes):** Participants vote on and discuss the most significant stories, developing shared criteria for what counts as significant change.
- **Cross-cutting themes (25 minutes):** Facilitated whole-group analysis of patterns across stories; facilitator captures themes on shared document.
- **Action planning (15 minutes):** Participants identify one concrete next step for professional application or CUBE network engagement.
- **Closing round (15 minutes):** Each participant shares one learning from the session.

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