

Program Overview:

Cultural Leaders Pod: Networking & Partnership-building

Learning & Support Program

MCH Learning & Support Program

MCH works with experienced practitioners from our network to offer training and learning opportunities to our community. The topics are selected based on inputs from our Fellows (for example through surveys and from post-program feedback) and from our own observations and reflections on what skills and knowledge could benefit practitioners working at the intersection of arts and society in Asia.

During 2025, we are offering two training and learning programs on different topics which follow the same structure; a series of virtual workshops (spread over 4-5 weeks) with a small group of participants, including one-to-one consultation with the trainer/facilitator on the participant's specific issues and queries. We are also launching a Cultural Leaders Pod, for small group peer-learning on specific areas of leadership practice.

The training and learning topics for 2025 are Psychological First Aid (May 27-29, June 4, 11, 18, 25, 2025) and Ethical Dilemmas in Arts Practice (July 30, August 6, 13, 20, 26 2025). The first Cultural Leaders Pod will run from April-June 2025, and focus on Networking & Partnership Building. Please follow @mekonghub on social media to keep up to date.

1. What is a Cultural Leaders Pod?

MCH is initiating the 'Cultural Leaders Pod' as a small-scale, supportive space for learning and reflection on leadership practice, for people working on art and social action in Asia.

Each 'pod'¹ will be just three people, all of whom work in art and social action in Asia, and all of whom are required to practice leadership in the work that they do. Each 'pod' will be formed around a specific area of leadership practice, so there is some common interest and objectives shared by the group. But at the same time, the people in the pod will come from different countries, different contexts and be doing diverse work in the sector. This diversity will allow the group to benefit from different perspectives and ways of looking at the opportunities and challenges they face.

Each pod will be supported by MCH for three months, through a structured program of group and individual coaching. It is our hope that the peer-relationships built through participation in the pod may continue to be beneficial to the participants (Fellows) after the program ends.

¹ a small group of peers, holding a safe space together for co-learning and development

2. What is coaching?

Coaching is an approach to supporting people with personal and professional development that is based on finding ways to change things that aren't working, or to take new actions to improve or initiate developments that you want to see in yourself and in your work. It can cover skills and knowledge, but can also look at your values, attitudes, beliefs and how those might influence what's important to you and what you are able to achieve.

Coaching involves a Coach, whose role is to listen deeply to you and to ask questions and offer reflections that will support you in clarifying your way forward. It is not a training, and you will not be told what to do. In coaching, you will find your own answers, and make your own decisions. For this reason it's important that you come to this program having clearly identified something you want to be better at, or something you keep finding yourself stuck with or feeling lost about, so that we can start out with an idea of what we are working towards.

Coaching can be a particularly useful approach for supporting people in leadership roles, as it can help you to become more self-aware, to develop a more strategic perspective and to more confidently navigate change.

3. How does this program work?

The Cultural Leaders Pod is a three-month program of small-group and individual coaching. All three Fellows joining this Pod will bring with them specific leadership development goals related to Networking & Partnership-building.

There will be four 90-minute group coaching sessions, and three 60-minute individual coaching sessions for each Fellow in the pod.

The individual coaching sessions will take place between the Fellow and Frances Rudgard, Managing Director of MCH. In the group coaching sessions, which will be facilitated by Frances, Fellows will also contribute coaching-style support to each other by asking questions and sharing reflections and observations. Please note: you are not expected to have prior knowledge or experience of coaching before joining the program. You will be given some tips on asking coaching questions and taking a coaching approach, but training on coaching is not the aim of this program.

The coaching sessions are completely confidential, so none of the discussions will be shared outside of the sessions. However, at the end of the program the three Fellows will all be offered the opportunity to produce a written or recorded reflection on any lessons learnt that they think could be valuable to share with emerging leaders in art and social action in Asia. With agreement from the Fellows, these reflections may be published on the 'Stories' or 'Resources' page of the MCH website.

In summary:

Month	Mar	April				May				June			
Group coaching (all Fellows)													
Individual coaching		F1	F2	F3		F1	F2	F3		F1	F2	F3	
[Optional] Reflective piece													

F1, F2, F3 refers to each individual Fellow

4. What are the goals of this program?

- Provide a safe and supportive space for art and cultural practitioners whose work is at the intersection of art/culture and society and whose work requires them to lead, to be able to reflect on their leadership practice
- Start building a peer community of cultural leaders in art and social action in Asia, who are able to support each other
- Support participating Fellows to make progress and improvements on Networking and Partnership-building, as an important part of their work on art and social action in Asia
- Develop MCH's awareness and understanding of the priorities and challenges experienced by our network with respect to leadership
- Generate learning that can be shared with a wider community of practitioners and emerging leaders working on art and social action in Asia

4. Who are the target participants for this program?

The target participants for this program are art and cultural practitioners (including artists) from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Taiwan, Thailand and Vietnam, who have at least five years professional experience and are in a position where their work on art and social action requires them to lead. For example, this may include leading or facilitating projects, running an organisation or collective, or taking a role as a spokesperson or influencer within a network or a specific community.

Am I a Cultural Leader?

For MCH, a Cultural Leader **does not** only mean people with formal positions where they have manager or leader in their title; and a Cultural Leader **does not** need to be employed by an organisation². For us a Cultural Leader in our context is someone who through their ideas and action is contributing to shaping the ecosystem of art and social action in Asia - this could be by trying to fill certain gaps, or to create new opportunities by expanding the boundaries of the field. A Cultural Leader has a strong sense of responsibility and accountability for what they do, and a vision for the impact of their work, that is bigger than themselves. They are deeply engaged in their community and their cultural context, and they work hard to bring others with them.

We welcome people who are still trying to define what leadership is for them, and may struggle to feel comfortable with using the word leader.

To be eligible for this program you must:

- Be a citizen of Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Taiwan, Thailand, or Vietnam
- Be an arts and culture practitioner (including but not limited to artist, manager, facilitator, producer, curator, teacher...) working on art and social action
- Have been working for at least five years
- Be doing work that requires you to take a leadership role
- Have clear and specific goals related to Networking and Partnership-Building that you want to work on during the program

² Please note that organisation managers and leaders are also encouraged to apply for this program! We deeply appreciate the work you do and the challenges you face :)

- Have enough working English to participate in discussions with other participants and the Facilitator, including being able to express your goals and your personal reflections
 - Grammar, vocabulary and technical accuracy of English does not matter at all, but it is important that you are comfortable enough to speak and listen, even if you might make mistakes

If you are selected for the program you will also need to:

- Have access to a quiet space and equipment to allow you to focus and participate in the online training workshops. You will need access to a good and reliable internet connection and privacy so you can use your camera and also talk confidentially.
 - Please note that MCH may be able to offer financial support to help you access a quiet space if this is needed. This can be discussed if you are offered a place on the program
- Commit to participate in all sessions listed in this document
 - This program intentionally has a very small number of participants, and its success depends on all Fellows fully supporting and engaging with each other and with the coaching provided
- Understand and support the guidelines that MCH builds to create a safe and effective space for learning
 - The coaching sessions are a completely confidential space
 - Fellows will be required to have their cameras on, as would be the case if it were in an in-person workshop

5. Why does the program have a selection process for this training? What are the selection criteria?

This is a very small-scale program with limited spaces. Due to the emphasis on coaching in the program, it is also important that the selected Fellows come with a clear motivation and readiness to actively engage in the sessions.

The criteria that the program will use to select participants for this program include:

- Adherence to the eligibility criteria
- Potential of the program to benefit applicants, assessed by:
 - Clarity of networking and partnership-development goals
 - Openness and ability to reflect on their leadership practice
 - Timeliness of this program in relation to their needs
- Ensuring that the group of participants is both diverse and complementary in terms of range of experiences and the goals that they have, as peer-learning is a key element of the program

6. How do I apply for this program?

- To apply for this program you need to complete the [application form](#) and email it to info@mekongculturalhub.org by March 16th 2025 (before 23.50pm ICT time)
- When you send your application, we will confirm that we have received it. If you have not heard from us within 3 working days of sending your application, please contact us again
- Shortly after the closing date we will review all applications for eligibility

- All applications meeting the eligibility criteria will then be reviewed according to the selection criteria listed above
- Shortlisted applicants will be invited to have a 20-30 minute informal interview during March 19th-20th
- All candidates will be notified of the outcome of the selection process by Monday March 23rd 2025

8. Who is the Facilitator?

This training workshop will be led by [Frances Rudgard](#), Director of MCH.