



# **RLI Funds Evaluation Report**

**TEDxUniversityofSussex: Together Apart**

24<sup>th</sup> April 2021

## Summary

TEDx events are independently organised TED events that aim to bring TED's mission (to research and discover 'ideas worth spreading') to local communities. TEDx is about uncovering and sharing new ideas in local areas to start new conversations, by creating a shared experience for its community. TEDxUniversityofSussex was an all-day conference that took place virtually on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021, themed “Together Apart” – a tribute to these challenging times that we’re in; but also, a celebration of the strength, perseverance and kindness that are getting us through it. The virtual conference comprised on 9 inspiring TEDx talks (hosted in 3 sessions with each session featuring 3 TEDx talks), 3 outstanding performances and a host of wellbeing activities (e.g., pilates, meditation, crafts), that participants can engage with during the conference between sessions, and post-conference. Alongside the main event, we also organised a series of interactive pre-conference workshops (one on leading without fear, one on LGBTQ+ inclusivity and another on gender discrimination) as an effort to increase interaction and create a more immersive environment to our virtual event.

The following are some of the aims of our event:

- To create a positive sense of shared identity (beyond our research/lab groups), that celebrates the ideas within the University of Sussex community, regardless of our research and jobs.
- To share their research to the public in an accessible way, breaking the notion of the ivory tower of academia (where knowledge is typically circulated within academic circles).
- To communicate the importance of taking a breather during a regular workday, with ideas from our Wellbeing Wall.
- To provide a platform to discuss important topics, such as mental health and marginalised groups, and to provide a safe space for our participants to celebrate their lives and successes.

## Pre-conference workshops

### Lead Without Fear

This workshop was focused around the concept of ‘leadership’ from a personal perspective (i.e., we lead ourselves in our everyday lives), as opposed to the conventional group perspective (i.e., leading a team). As such, it was aimed at exploring how individuals can move past their limiting beliefs and tackling the idea of unconsciously formed barriers (e.g., imposter syndrome) that limits them from saying and doing the things that they aim to. This workshop was facilitated [REDACTED] who is experienced in working with leaders, students and change-makers at global multinationals, small enterprises and not-for profit organisations (NGO); and was participated by 7 attendees from all over the world (including Thailand, Malaysia and others).

## **Inclusive (LGBTQ+) Conversations**

This is a workshop that was aimed at starting conversations between members of the LGBTQ+ community and the non-queer community, which was formatted beyond the conventional structure of workshops, where the facilitators assume the more knowledgeable position. Instead, this session was essentially just one, open conversation, where common challenges/issues faced by LGBTQ+ people in academia and in our Sussex community (on a personal and on an institutional level) were proposed and discussed together as a group. It is important to talk about inclusivity; but more importantly, we believe in the need to practise it. This was the philosophy of "Inclusive Conversations" - we wanted to provide the community with a safe space to discuss LGBTQ+ issues, the opportunity to choose which issues to take further and finally working towards overcoming the issues and challenges identified together as a group in the workshop. This workshop was facilitated by [REDACTED] with expertise in inclusivity and diversity), [REDACTED] (with expertise in trans representation) and [REDACTED] (PhD researcher in body image), and was participated by 9 attendees from all over the world (including Italy, Malaysia and others).

## **Challenge Gender Discrimination**

This workshop was aimed at exploring various forms of gender discrimination and whether these reflect a pattern, by firstly looking at how gender discrimination affects our lives, and the emotions we feel being a target of discrimination and when witnessing discrimination. It is also important to explore the ways in which we do or do not take action against discrimination when those discriminatory incidents happen. As such, this workshop was also focused around why people do or do not intervene, why it is crucial to intervene and how we can become active bystanders. Finally, discussions around how we can collectively take action against gender discrimination (e.g., participating in protests for gender justice), by sharing some findings from existing collective action literature. This workshop was facilitated by [REDACTED] (lecturer in the School of Psychology at the University of Sussex) and [REDACTED] (PhD researcher in disaster communities and social identity) for those who identify as women or non-binary; and was attended by 13 participants from all over the world (including the US, Malaysia and others).

## **Main event**

### **Conference Programme**

“Together Apart” was hosted by [REDACTED] (undergraduate student in Psychology, University of Sussex), and the table below contains the conference programme, along with details of each of the TEDx talk.

<b>Session</b>	<b>Programme</b>	<b>Speaker/Performer</b>
1	Introduction videos	-
	Opening music performance	Concept of Thought

	“How speaking against racism improves the country’s health”	██████████ (Medical student and writer)
	Scavenger hunt (submitting a photograph of an item around them that contains all three (and only the three) TED colours, which are red, black and white, to stand a chance to win a £20 voucher.	██████████
	“How listening is the first step to inclusion”	██████████ (Global Communications Manager)
	Dance performance	Sussex Dance
	“Why selfishness is at the heart of great activism”	██████████ (Human rights lawyer and independent consultant)
2	“How Virtual Reality can make us kinder”	██████████ (Entrepreneur and interdisciplinary researcher)
	Social media segment (posting a photo of their TEDx conference set-up using the hashtag #myTEDxUOSview on social media)	██████████
	“How media representation helped me be a proud trans woman”	██████████ (PhD researcher in media and communications)
	Music performance	SUCCINCT
	“The psychology behind why art empowers”	██████████ (PhD researcher in Psychology)
3	“Change your language, improve mental health”	██████████ (Student social worker)
	Social media segment (Together Apart bingo)	██████████
	“Tackling corruption starts with you”	██████████ (Lecturer in Corruption Analysis)
	“What entrepreneurs can learn from children with clubfoot”	██████████ (Postgraduate Student and Chevning Scholar)

## Wellbeing Wall

A Wellbeing Wall was hosted on Padlet, primarily as the platform that hosts wellbeing activities during the breaks between sessions. This wall remained online for a week post-conference, so that participants can continue to practise taking breaks using the activities on the wall. The activities hosted on our wall included pet therapy (i.e., a column with photos of pets), meditation, pilates, crafts, walking routes suggestions, music playlists and the Together Apart bingo.

## Participants

We had 330 registrations (for an e-ticket) for the main “Together Apart” event, which was streamed on Youtube Live. The livestream had a total of 460 views (with the highest number of viewers at any one time being 92). Our number of ‘views’ has been gradually increasing since then (so far, by another 312 views), resulting in the current total of 772 views. In terms of text-based interactions, a total of 210 chat messages were sent in the chatbox during the livestream. Other forms of engagements also took place during the livestream including live-tweeting, live-blogging and live-reporting on Instagram.

## Other Channels

Alongside the main event and the pre-conference workshops, we also created a blog space as a pre-event online platform, where PG students, researchers and ECRs are welcomed to submit any written pieces containing an idea worth spreading (which is the main TEDx philosophy). Some examples of topics on this blog include imposter syndrome, trans representation, vulnerability, green exercise and femininity. This blog space is hosted at [www.tedxuniversityofsussex.medium.com](http://www.tedxuniversityofsussex.medium.com) and is currently still live (as we are planning to take it further with our upcoming TEDxUniversityofSussex venture).

## Feedback

### Participants’ Feedback

Event	Average Rating 1 (low) to 10 (high)	Feedback
Lead Without Fear	9.3	“It really helped to solidify my personal thoughts and feelings with the content she was delivering. Having conversations with people from around the world and from different backgrounds was also extremely interesting and beneficial.”
Inclusive (LGBTQ+) Conversations	8.7	“I appreciated mainly the climate of inclusivity encouraged by the speakers”
Challenge Gender Discrimination	10	“I liked the speakers, and how they structured the workshop”
Together Apart	10	“All of the talks and performances but I also Loved seeing Brighton and realise how much I miss being there!”
Wellbeing Wall	9.33	-

## Collaborators' Feedback

Event	Rating 1 (low) to 10 (high)	Feedback (One selected at random)
Lead Without Fear	10	“ It's been a pleasure from start to now! You perfectly balance great structure, process, organisation, and efficiency, with a wonderful humanity - warm, welcoming, friendly, open and inspiring. I appreciate your quick response time, rapid decision-making and an innovative way to open up opportunities and create this session!”
Inclusive (LGBTQ+) Conversations	10	-
Challenge Gender Discrimination	10	“The organiser was always quick to respond. She was also very approachable and helpful. I am glad to discuss very important topic with the there members of campus and wider communities. I hope this conversations lead the further practical steps in campus environment.”
Together Apart	9.84	“Really collaborative, helpful and supportive team of organisers. It was an absolute pleasure to work with everyone.”

## Evaluations

### Strengths

Our main event Together Apart has gone seamlessly. We were particularly proud of our presentation format, where we took the audience on a tour of Brighton as we introduced each TEDx talk, bringing a real sense of adventure to our audience who tuned in virtually. This idea has really elevated the TEDxUniversityofSussex experience. We were also able to provide our speakers with professional speech training, led by [REDACTED] who

is a journalist-turned-speech coach with experience presenting at the BBC and ITV. This way, we felt that our speakers were able to benefit from their TEDxUniversityofSussex experience, on top of their effort in curating their TEDx talks. Our online blog space also provided opportunity for researchers to showcase their writing and research in a less restrictive way, which attracted a good number of viewers. More importantly, we felt that we did achieve what we set out to (which is to create a TEDxUniversityofSussex community). Based on the feedback that we have received, and the conversations that we have had with our community, we believe that we were able to this aim. Finally, we were particularly happy with the collaboration that was fostered through our platform, bringing together the work of PhD researchers, undergraduate and postgraduate students, ECRs, academics and non-academics from across the globe.

### **Areas of improvements**

Given the short timeframe that we had to put together an event of this scale, we also feel that there are areas that we can improve on. Firstly, the participation of our workshops was rather low (about 50% of the registered participants showed up). In hindsight, we should have expected a greater level of dropouts, despite our aim to maintain a small workshop size. Secondly, there is more that can be done to encourage researchers to submit their writing to our online blog space. The number of submissions that we received were much lower than anticipated, possibly also due to the short timeframe that would allow researchers to pace their writing. Thirdly, it would have been good to have included an interactive networking space that could have also hosted a wellbeing space. This was not possible at this time due to budget constraints and the (limited) size of the organising team.

### **Statement of Expenditure**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Price</b>
Equipment (i.e., stabiliser, ring lights, microphones and webcams)	£405.30
Stationery (i.e., ribbon, glossy paper, envelopes, tape and cards)	£27.43
Postage	£20.40
Facebook and Instagram advertisement	£76.00
	£529.13

### **Continuity and Future Directions**

All of the TEDxUniversityofSussex talks were entered into their post-production stage, as per TEDx guidelines. They have been approved and uploaded onto the official TEDx Youtube channel as of May 2021. In terms of future direction, the TEDxUniversityofSussex organising team is currently applying for a Studio license from TED with hopes of taking TEDxUniversityofSussex into its new chapter, “TEDxUniversityofSussexStudio”.