

***This resource, from our Audiences and Insights Officer, Rachel Miller, provides some top tips on what you can do now with your data to help your museum get ready to welcome audiences back in the future.***

Audience Insights is an essential tool that helps museums to become thriving, strong organisations who put their audiences at the heart of what they do.

Evidenced based evaluation is also a requirement for all major funders and it can help museums to:

- Have a clear understanding of who their current audiences are and who their potential audiences might be
- Increase their audiences by targeting and tailoring their offer
- Write informed, evidence based funding applications
- Advocate to current and potential partners about the value and reach of their audiences
- Prioritise areas of work e.g. programming or outreach
- Spend limited marketing budgets more effectively
- Engage with new audiences locally and nationally
- Understand why people engage, their interests and what they value
- Understand the impact of tourism on your audiences

### Top tips on what you can do now

#### 1. Review the data you already have, summarise your findings and share it amongst your museum teams:

- You might have data from a visitor survey, comments book or Trip Advisor. Whatever you have will be useful to help you create a **baseline** – a basic understanding of whom your current audiences are.
- Your **baseline** can be included in your Forward Plan, Audience Development Plan or funding applications and should definitely be used to drive decisions when creating any engagement opportunities for audiences.
- Making sure that you and your museum can understand and interpret your data is the most important thing – if you don't understand it then you are less likely to want to make use of it!
- It doesn't have to be super sophisticated, transcribing or collating your data onto spreadsheets is a good starting point. You can then apply simple graphs and charts to help you better interpret your data. Is there anyone in your museum who loves analysing data or is skilled at using Excel? Ask around – you don't know what hidden skills people might have!
- Write a short summary of what the results are telling you and make sure that you share the results/your report with the rest of your museum team. Your data supports your audience development which, to be successful, needs to be a whole team effort!
- Sharing your data results is also a great way to say well done to all of those people in your museum who have worked hard to deliver a fantastic experience for your visitors!

### Top tips: Have you collected any postcodes from your visitors?

- Postcode data can provide detailed insight into both the geographic distribution of your audiences as well as their socio-economic, or demographic, background.
- Postcodes can be mapped through segmentation or classification systems such as CACI Acorn or even very simply through Google Maps – all you need to do this is a Gmail account and your postcodes in an Excel file! Go to [google.com/mymaps](https://www.google.com/mymaps) and 'Create and New Map' from there!

# Resource:

## 2. Check out some freely available data to help boost your knowledge of local communities:

- There are many freely available data sources available for you to access online. These will help you better understand your museum and your audiences in relation to the local populations around you.
- You will be able to benchmark your current visitor data against socio-economic, health and demographic data on local populations, which may also enable you to understand the groups who have traditionally not visited you as well.
- You can access free data from your Local Authority, Public Health England, the English Indices of Deprivation and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The 2011 UK Census is another great resource.
- For Local Authority data search for 'statistical population profiles', 'statistical ward profiles' or 'local authority population statistics'.
- The English Indices of Deprivation includes an *explorer system* where you can map postcodes
- On the ONS website you will find data from the 'Taking Part' survey which, for the last two years has included data from audiences on barriers to engagement

## 3. Are you delivering any online events? You can evaluate these during this time as well.

- If you have moved your events to be delivered online - talks, reminiscence work, discovery sessions - you can evaluate these with simple surveys, or by contacting those attendees post-event.
- This will help you to demonstrate to funders and stakeholders how agile you can be in terms of audience engagement, as well as show the impact you had on your remote audiences.
- An option is to share a link to a survey at the end of a video, via email if they signed up for access, or sharing one on social media following an online activity session.
- Make sure that you are using the right survey platform for you and your activity (so you may need to do a little bit of research to begin with) to ensure that you get relevant data back from your audiences.
- Similarly, asking the right questions is important – you will still want to know where people are from, some basic demographic information, how they heard about your online events, and how they might want to continue to engage with you.

**Remember to use online analytics** to get to know your online audiences. Access these free tools to analyse engagement with your content and hone your digital engagement strategy.



Your website: [Google Analytics](#)



Facebook: [Audience Insights](#)



Twitter: [Analytics](#)

For support using analytics tools contact our Digital Engagement Officer [rachel.cartwright@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.cartwright@bristol.gov.uk)

## Top tips:

- If you've got lots of data in text form then why not use a Word Cloud to help you better understand what your visitors are saying; the most frequently used words will feature most prominently.
- Word Clouds are a great way to easily present qualitative data or open-text responses. There are lots of free word cloud apps online, including [wordart.com](http://wordart.com), where you can import your text to make a cloud!



## 4. Get ready to re-open, re-evaluate and make new plans:


- With the topic of re-opening museums beginning to come to the forefront, many are starting to look at what re-opening options they have. Museums should look to existing data on their audiences to help in their decisions, alongside advice and guidance from HM Government and Public Health England.
- How audiences engage with museums in the future may well have an impact on the types of evaluation that can be utilised.
- Post-lockdown audience evaluation will play a really important part in helping your museum, and the sector as a whole, to understand how audiences have changed and what types of engagement they may want in the future.
- You might not be in a position to make any final decisions on how you are going to re-open just yet, but when looking at your options try to think about the methods of data collection you might be able to apply, and those that you might not, as well.
- For example, if you are considering operating pre-booked tours, will people be able to book these online through your website? If so, then your booking system could also be used to share a post-tour survey asking for feedback!
- What might you need your Stewards or Front of House teams to do to help encourage visitors to provide feedback? Will they need extra support or training to help them understand your new methods of evaluation?
- It is good practice for museums to have an *Audience Development Plan*. This may be a standalone document which links to your Forward Plan, or it might be a section in your Forward Plan.
- It is likely that this will have to be reviewed and refreshed, so now might be a good time to start thinking about how your strategy for engaging audiences may need to change – unfortunately, the annual Bank Holiday weekend family fun day you were planning, may not be able to happen this year, so what else can you do instead?
- Use the data you already have to help guide your thinking, and don't forget to include future evaluations in your revised plans, as mentioned above!
- By reviewing or creating an Audience Development Plan now you will be better able to effectively measure your success in the future. You will also be able to demonstrate to funders and stakeholders how well you achieved your aims to welcome visitors back in new, exciting and creative ways after re-opening!

**If you need any guidance or support on developing your own Audience Development Plan, contact our Audiences and Insights Officer, Rachel Miller at [rachel.miller@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:rachel.miller@bristol.gov.uk).**

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