



Framework for Working in Partnership

Rebuilding the Foundations: Gloucestershire's Museums

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Introduction

Rebuilding the Foundations aims to create the ability for participant museums to work through, and with, partners to consult with local communities with whom they have not yet engaged about their emerging audience and volunteer plans and possible visitor and volunteer offers.

- This framework has been produced to support this aim, enabling museums to think about and work through some of the key issues, whatever their size and scale
- It encourages a planned and thoughtful approach to partnership development, to give the best chance of success for both partners
- It can be used to map where you are now, how you might improve, and develop your engagement
- Larger organisations might want to use it as the basis for a partnership strategy and plan that aligns to their Audience Development and Volunteering Strategies
- Smaller organisations might want to use it as a process tool and aide memoir when embarking on shared initiatives

Definition of Partnership

There are lots of definitions of partnership working, but this one from The Partnering Initiative and Partnership Brokers Association is helpful in its simplicity:

'Partnership is an ongoing working relationship where risks and benefits are shared'

Suggests a commitment to mutuality, in the form of:

- Contributions, albeit of different types, from all those involved
- Co-creation/co-ownership of the partnership's activities
- Shared risk, responsibility, and accountability

(Source: The Art of Partnering, King's College London)

Why Work in Partnership?

Working in partnership can support you to deliver your museum's Vision, Mission, and strategic aims. This might include:

- Raising the profile of your museum
- Having a positive impact on how you are perceived by stakeholders and funders
- Increasing awareness with specific target audience groups
- Reaching audiences that would not normally engage with you
- Widening participation in your museum's activities
- New perspectives from more diverse stakeholders
- Furthering equality, diversity, and inclusion

Working in partnership helps to meet the *Rebuilding the Foundations* project aim to:

- Reach new audiences and volunteers

Despite these rewards, it is not a quick fix!

How to Start Strategically

1. Vision and Mission (Purpose)

Starting with your Vision and Mission moves you from a *passive* approach to partnerships (working with people who come to your door) to a *proactive* approach where partnerships are sought out that help you deliver that Vision and Mission.

As you can't do it all, a clear Vision and Mission helps prioritise who you want to work with and why, supported by your strategic aims/goals (e.g., Audience Development, Equality Diversity and Inclusion, Volunteer Succession planning).

This could be articulated as a statement as to why you work in partnership and what the value is to the museum if you are creating a separate partnership strategy and plan, flowing from your purpose.

A clear Vision and Mission also helps potential partners to understand your organisation, and to know if they want to work with you.

Next time someone comes to your door, first test that the opportunity has the potential to directly contribute to driving forwards your Vision and Mission.

Your museum's Vision:

(Desired end state) What long-term (and inspirational) change do you want to make to the world? Why do your issues matter? What would success look like?

Mission:

(Why you exist) How are you going to deliver on your Vision and make this change happen? What do you do? Where do you do it? Who do you do it for?

2. Evidence Base - Insights

Use evidence instead of assumptions to identify and prioritise the types of partnerships you need to help deliver your Vision and Mission, aims/goals.

Rebuilding the Foundations is focussed on local communities – what can you learn about yours through checking data and research?

Sources of evidence might be:

- *Rebuilding the Foundations* Organisational Health Check and consultant reports
- Surveys
- Ticket and Gift Aid data (ticket types sold, postcodes)
- Social media analytics (demographics of fans/followers)
- Membership and event booking data
- Previous activity evaluation
- Volunteer data (demographics, EDI data)
- Open-Source data – census, health and deprivation indices, local authority data

Questions to ask as you look for insights:

- Who from your local community has potentially been excluded from the museum – as a visitor, volunteer or representationally in the stories on display?
- How might working in partnership help to rectify these exclusions and omissions?

(Questions adapted from: Co-Creating Community Projects, SHARE Museums East)

3. Partnership Evaluation – Previous and Current

Consider evaluating what you know about previous partnerships to understand what happened and what can be revived or learnt from them.

New or current partnerships should be evaluated as a learning process and way of measuring success, done in conjunction with your partners.

Consider all the ways people have worked with you in recent years when completing the table.

Date of Partnership	Partner name/s (e.g., group, organisation, individual)	How did you work with them? (e.g., invited to an event; consulted; co-opted as a volunteer; facilitated co-design/co-creation; followed them – decision making handed over)	What was the effect? (e.g., more people; different/more diverse groups/ages of people; more repeat visits; more engaging /relevant storytelling; longer dwell time; higher level of engagement; increased volunteering/volunteer retention)	Were both your success criteria met? (conclusion of evaluation undertaken in partnership)	What value was it to the museum's purpose? (e.g., Mission & Vision, aims /goals)	Did they align with priority partner types? (from insights)	Identification of further opportunities to engage with them or similar groups in the future? (if meet value /priority criteria)

4. Readiness

There are several elements it's good to consider having in place to be ready for new partnerships:

- Clarity of purpose – how partnerships help deliver your Mission and Vision, aims/goals
- Identification of priority partner types
- Organisation-wide commitment to the benefits of working in partnership (trustees/leadership)
- Commitment to having an evaluation culture
- Key point of contact who keeps a record of development/outcomes e.g., partnership ambassador volunteer role
- Policies, procedures, and training to support safe, equal, diverse, and inclusive partnership working (Safeguarding and EDI)

It's a good idea to think through what sort of things you have to offer partners, so you don't go empty handed, but also so you stay focussed on what would *support your museum's purpose, aims/goals*.

This should include a consideration of available resources (people, money, time, space), whilst also being open to generating resource (e.g., a grant that includes staffing).

They do not all need to be of equal weight, different levels of activity are appropriate at different times and can deepen with the relationship. The Audience Agency has devised a Spectrum of Engagement which might inspire you, ranging from:

Invited to an event consulted co-opted as a volunteer facilitated co-design/co-creation followed them – decision making handed over

Priority Partner Types	What <i>Might</i> They Want?	Your Potential Offers	Clarity of Purpose
-Who are your target Audiences/ Volunteers for widening & diversifying? (Your Insights will support this)	-Short, medium, long-term, regular, flexible volunteering? -Engagement/collaborations for events, exhibitions, visitor experience, collections? -Levels of activity appropriate at different times - via invites, consultation, co-creation, decisions handed over? (See <i>The Audience Agency Spectrum of Engagement</i>)	-Consider available resources (people, £, time, space), but be open to generating resource. -Don't all need to be of equal weight (see <i>The Audience Agency Spectrum of Engagement</i> for inspiration)	-What is the benefit to your museum? (Purpose, Aims/Goals) e.g., -Raise the profile of your museum -Have a positive impact on how you are perceived by stakeholders & funders -Increase awareness with specific target audience groups -Reach audiences that would not normally engage with you -Widen participation in your activities -Provide new perspectives from more diverse stakeholders -Further equality, diversity, & inclusion

<p><i>E.g., a group/org who involve young people.</i></p>	<p><i>E.g., short term volunteering, leading to regular or flexible?</i></p>	<p><i>E.g., Kids in Museums Takeover Day consultation. Share their thoughts & ideas about a visit & how they could do future Takeover Days (or become involved as vols on other projects). Pre-planning tool.</i></p>	<p><i>E.g., Reach audiences that would not normally engage with us; widen participation in our activities; provide new perspectives – aims identified in Forward Plan...</i></p>

5. Research - Who

Now you are in a position to seek out partners local to you.

If you plan to work with more 'vulnerable' groups, you are looking for organisations who can share safeguarding support for those engaging, working through them to reach your target audiences.

Here are some ideas of ways to find partners to support you to fulfil your goals and priorities around new audiences and volunteers:

- Did you identify further opportunities to engage with previous partners, or similar groups that you can follow up?
- Have conversations with different people in your local community, be open to possibilities. A serendipitous match might come up
- Go to where target people are; be involved, go to their events, build a sense of trust
- Use existing volunteers' networks and interests to bring in partners

Here are some types of organisations to support you:

- Local schools, colleges, universities
- Youth groups, Local Authority and charitable organisations working with young people that aren't schools and therefore will be working with more diverse 'harder to reach' marginalised young people
- Charities working locally with vulnerable and/or marginalised adults
- Local employment, Education and Training focussed charities
- Cared for/carer groups – including young and older people
- Groups supporting mental health, wellbeing and healthy living
- Groups for people with lived experience of disability including ASD/Neurodiversity/SEND/sight/hearing impaired
- Black Lives Matter groups
- LGBTQ+ groups
- Foodbanks

(Credit: *Rebuilding the Foundations* consultants)

Research Results

Target Audience/Volunteer	Organisations	Contact Details	Contacted?	Result (e.g., what offers have you made that support your museum's purpose, aims/goals? What do they need? Is there enough alignment to develop the conversation further? See Initiation)
<i>Young People</i>	<i>Local secondary school</i>			
	<i>Local college</i>			
	<i>Local youth club</i>			
	<i>Young Gloucestershire</i>			
	<i>OPENhouse</i>			

6. Initiation

You are now ready to develop the conversation with potential partners, to see if you can find a way of working together that ensures *mutual benefit* to make it worthwhile for all parties.

Some questions you need to ask *each other*:

- What are the interests of our organisations?
- What are our aims and motivations?
- How can working together help us to meet our aims?

It's critical to have a clear understanding of what you are getting into, and all agree about the 'why' before jumping to the 'what' and 'how'.

You have the offers you've developed as a basis of a conversation (the 'what'), but be prepared to adapt, think outside of the box and be ready to co-create and co-own the activities following consultation.

It's important that you all bring something different and required to the table too. Complementary skills, experience, and resources (the 'how').

Not all your discussions are going to take off! Be willing to walk away if there's no shared sense of purpose that's easy to explain.

(Questions adapted from: Co-Creating Community Projects, SHARE Museums East; ideas from the Audience Agency)

7. Effective Partnership Working

Here are some questions to support an effective *partnership working cycle*. The prompts in this framework around purpose, insights, evaluation, and readiness should aid some of your answers (Questions from: Museum-University Partnership Initiative, NCCPE).

Getting Started

- What do we hope to achieve from working in partnership?
- What do we each have to offer a partnership? What do we need?
- What might make working together difficult? What will make it work well?
- How will we know if the partnership has been successful? What does success look like? What form should our evaluation take?
- How will we communicate, and how often? What methods shall we use?
- Who will own the outputs from this project? Do we share the outputs, outcomes, resources, intellectual property etc.?

Working Together (during)

- Are we communicating effectively together? If not – how might we do better?
- Are there unexpected outcomes, challenges, or opportunities that need to be explored?
- What does success look like, and to what extent are we on track to achieve it?
- Are there things we did not anticipate that mean we need to review the project timeline? What are the implications for all involved?
- How are we using evaluation to help us reflect on our work together, and to monitor progress?

What Next

- Has this been a successful partnership for me, my colleagues, and organisation? Has it added value to the work we are doing?
- Do we have learning that we could share with others?
- Can we realistically see ourselves working together in the future? If so, do we want to scale our work, or to start something new?
- How can the partners maintain a relationship post-project?
- Who else could we be working with? How will we decide who to involve?

Extra Resources and Sources of Inspiration

The Art of Partnering, King's College London [full-report.pdf \(kcl.ac.uk\)](#)

Collaboration: Can you do more together than alone? Audience Agency [Collaboration: can you do more together than alone? - CultureHive](#)

Power to the People, Museums Association [Power-to-the-People-2018.pdf \(ma-production.ams3.digitaloceanspaces.com\)](#)

Co-Creating Community Projects, SHARE Museums East [Co-creating-Community-Projects.pdf \(sharemuseumseast.org.uk\)](#)

Museum-University Partnership Initiative, National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement [Museum-University Partnership Initiative | NCCPE \(publicengagement.ac.uk\)](#) (lots of practical tools for facilitating discussions between organisations considering the purpose and priorities of their intended partnership; those designed to stimulate conversations between partners about the nature of their partnership; those to help people explore partnership development, suggesting actions and resources to help manage each stage of the relationship).

Building Effective Relationships and Partnerships with the Business Community, SHARE Museums East [Building Effective Relationships and Partnerships with the Business Community.docx \(sharemuseumseast.org.uk\)](#)

Our Museum Project [Partnerships Archives - Our Museum](#) (Links to video case studies and tools for participatory community engagement)

Evaluation Principles, Centre for Cultural Value [CCV Evaluation Principles \(culturalvalue.org.uk\)](#)

Age Friendly Museums Network project [Age Friendly Museum Network - South West Museum Development \(southwestmuseums.org.uk\)](#)

Traveller Stories Partnership [Case study - 'Traveller Stories' at Weston Museum - South West Museum Development \(southwestmuseums.org.uk\)](#)



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