

Introduction

Undertaking and using audience research is a valuable activity and a requirement of Museum Accreditation. However, it can be daunting and time-consuming. This guide provides tips and tools for staff and volunteers who want to introduce or expand audience research within their museum. It aims to help them advocate for audience research internally to get broader buy-in and provide steps to work through to kick off the process.

Why undertake audience research?

Reasons to undertake audience research include to help you to:

- Reach your goals, for example to attract more visitors, diversify your audiences, build deeper relationships with existing audiences
- Understand who your audiences/visitors are, their needs, preferences and behaviours
- Understand who under-served and marginalised audiences are
- Identify potential growth audiences
- Improve your offer and audience satisfaction
- Plan and forecast, for example visitor flow and income
- Develop an evidence-based funding application
- Motivate staff, trustees and volunteers
- Prioritise and allocate limited resources more effectively
- Compare your data with other museums and sector benchmarking data

It is a requirement of [Museum Accreditation](#) (8. Understand and develop your audiences and 9. Engage with your users and improve their experience) and a priority of many funders.

How can I/we advocate for audience research within our museum?

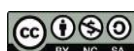
- Identify the key barriers to undertaking audience research. For example, is it a lack of time? Is it not knowing where to start?
- Being pragmatic, think about what you can do about the barriers. For example, focus on light touch audience research methods, identify training opportunities, familiarise the team with the Accreditation requirements
- Identify who needs to be won over and what their hesitancy is
- Find your allies within the museum who are also interested in audience research and work together. Is there a board member who could champion this?
- Determine how audience research can support your museum's key goals. What difference can it make? For example, to identify which audiences to focus on for income generation
- Find out if there are other comparable museums that undertake audience research – can you have a conversation with them to understand what they do and how? Can you share case studies as inspiration internally?
- Use the resources in this pack to help you create a simple audit or plan of where to begin
- Share your ideas internally, for example at a team meeting, email, board presentation

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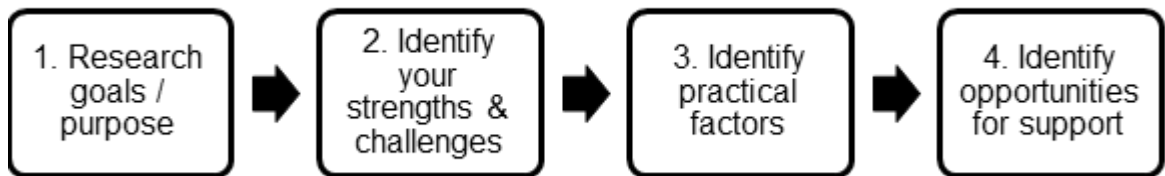
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How do I/we prepare our museum for audience research?



If you have agreed that you want to start doing some or more audience research:

1. Research goals/purpose

Identify what you/your museum wants or needs to achieve with audience research:

- What data do you need?
- How will you use it?
- Who will use it?

2. Identify your strengths and challenges

Be clear and honest about any challenges or barriers, as these either need to be overcome, or they will be parameters that you need to operate within. For example, limited time available, or volunteers not feeling comfortable approaching visitors about surveys. Identify any relevant strengths you can build on, for example someone is a spreadsheet wizard.

3. Identify practical factors

Consider the following practical aspects:

- **Your timescales:** do you have a deadline for the research, or will you set your own? For example, would you like the data collected and analysed in time to feed into plans for the next financial year or peak season?
- **Your available budget:** do you have any budget to invest in this (such as for tablets for visitors to use, freelance facilitator support) or do you need to work with free methods?
- **Your available resources:** do you already have the resources you need? For example, a tablet for digital audience research.
- **Team skills needed:** is any training required, such as knowing how to minimise bias in research, how to approach visitors about taking part, and how to analyse qualitative feedback?

4. Identify opportunities for support

Identify any relevant opportunities to support your work, for example any pots of funding and any free training available.

Resource: Getting ready for audience research

Where do I/we start?

Work through these questions to help you identify priorities and next steps that are achievable for your museum:

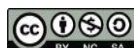
What are our museum's main goals? And/or what are our audience development / marketing goals?
How can we use audience research to support these goals?
What do we already know about our audiences / potential audiences? What data do we already have access to? (See checklist as a prompt)
What existing data (if any) can we analyse and that we don't currently use? (See checklist)
What don't we know about our audiences or potential audiences that we'd like to find out? (See checklist)
What research methods could we use to get this information?
What research will provide the biggest impact? What is our priority? How will we use these insights? (Use the impact/effort matrix)

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What are our next steps? For example, create an action plan (identify short term and longer-term actions), set up a research project team, find new volunteers to support this, seek funding to support the research. Identify who will be responsible for any research, and who needs to be consulted and/or kept informed.

Impact/effort matrix

If you have a several ideas for research you need or want to undertake, consider using the impact/effort matrix to help you to prioritise:

Impact: what difference will this make?	High	Quick wins Start now:	Major research Plan for the future / create a project team / identify funding to support:
	Low	Possibles Consider undertaking one/some:	Not a priority Re-evaluate in future:
		Low	High
		Effort: how time-consuming or complex is this to undertake? Can include reference to resources/budget needed	

Resource: Getting ready for audience research

Consider higher effort and lighter touch research methods. Higher effort methods typically take longer to plan, carry out and/or analyse, especially if done robustly (with adequate and representative sample sizes, minimising bias, and appropriate analysis of qualitative feedback) and may require more investment. For lower effort methods, the analysis may be automated, the focus is on one or two questions, and/or the response rate is likely to be high.

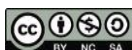
Examples of higher effort/resource methods:	Examples of lighter touch and quicker methods:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor surveys • Online surveys • Focus groups • Visitor observation • Mystery shopping • In-depth interviews • Facilitated visits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media polls • Using digital marketing analytics • Adding a question to booking forms • Looking at online reviews • Asking visitors one question on entry for a tally chart (e.g. 'Is this your first time visiting us?') • Drop boxes and button boxes (similar to those you see in supermarkets) • 'Graffiti' or feedback/comment walls • A team meeting

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