



Association of  
Independent  
Museums

Helping Heritage  
Organisations Prosper

# Success Guides

## UNDERSTANDING YOUR AUDIENCES

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Museums sector is one that is always striving to make improvements, to move forward, to be the best that it can be. Those who work within museums and heritage sites are making decisions that affect their organisation every day. Knowledge of the museum's audiences is a key ingredient in decision-making, alongside staff knowledge and experience and ideas from elsewhere. It gives you an evidence base and helps you to minimise risk to your organisation.

How much do you know about the make-up of your audience or visitor base? Do you know who is and isn't visiting, the frequency of their visits, what would make them visit more, spend more, donate or volunteer with you? What could improve their engagement with you and spread the word? And what about who isn't visiting but could be persuaded to?

**This guide will help you to consider what you know about your audiences both current and potential, why it would be worthwhile improving this, and how you might go about doing it. Crucially, it looks at how you can then use this knowledge and insight to deliver your strategic goals and make your organisation more resilient.**

By the end of the guide we are aiming for you to:-

- i. have a better understanding of what we mean by understanding audiences and the importance of this for your whole organisation;
- ii. be able to follow a process that will deliver a programme;
- iii. gain knowledge of the different external sources of support and data, how to use them and how to find out more;
- iv. build confidence to tackle this in-house with low cost alternatives to suit all types of organisation;
- v. consider examples that are relevant to a breadth of organisations;
- vi. know how to find out more.

Gaining an understanding of your visitors takes time and needs to be a regular undertaking - times and people change and you need to keep abreast of this. If you want to measure your progress you need to gather data consistently over time. So there is no 'quick fix' - sharpening your visitor focus takes time and effort. This guide will offer you advice and sources of information that will help you to achieve this whatever your size, location or resource. In the last section the guide works through example cases as well as real life case studies from a range of organisations.

Understanding your audiences could be the first step in you writing an Audience Development Plan, and a key part of your submission for Accreditation too.

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## CONTEXT

### What do we mean by 'understanding your audience' ?

Understanding your audiences, knowing who they are, their visit behaviour, their motivations, their needs and expectations, brings a huge amount of insight into helping you to make your organisation resilient. Knowing who isn't engaging with you, but who has the potential to become a visitor, is also important in being able to build and diversify your audience base.



To be resilient organisations we need our museums and heritage sites to stay relevant to today's audiences. Our reference points, use of technology, the language we use and the content and themes we communicate in our displays and events need to be appropriate

to today's audiences. We can increase our relevance by regularly talking and listening to audiences and then responding to these discussions with our programmes and offer. The Museum Accreditation scheme recognises this with the inclusion of 'understand and develop your audiences' in the 'Users and their experiences' requirement.

To gain more knowledge about our audiences, we need to undertake some research, consult, listen, analyse and respond.

Let's start with some general definitions

- **Primary research** is research that you will undertake yourself from scratch, gathering data directly, for example a visitor survey, gathering visitor postcodes, or a feedback wall.
- **Secondary research** is sometimes called desk research and is making use of existing data published by others, for instance the Census, the Scottish Household Survey, or evaluation reports from across the sector.
- **Quantitative research** is about measurement, and is data that can be expressed in numerical form. It is analysed using statistics and should be easily comparable. An example would be "33% of our visitors are in family groups".

# CONTEXT

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- **Qualitative research** uses broader questions and themes and patterns to collate findings rather than statistics. An example would be that "many visitors are motivated to visit for social reasons and the café and shop are important aspects of their visit".
- **Segmentation** is a way to look at the population by dividing it into groups whose members have similarities to help us understand the way they behave and how they are motivated to make decisions. On a very basic level, you can do this by age range but we all know that there can be more differences between people of the same age than similarities. So segmentation has got sophisticated and there are lots of different models out there for us to use grouping people by lifestyle, geo-demographics, life-stage, behaviour, attitudes, motivations - and mixes of all of these. The purpose is to help us to better understand our audience and also to target them with the right, engaging communications, programmes and visitor experiences.

You can combine these approaches to get real insight for your organisation. You might use qualitative research to test out the details of ideas with a small group and then use quantitative research to test out the wider demand within a larger audience sample. Or the other way around - you might use quantitative methods to understand how your visitors can be segmented into different groups - and then test out new ideas with particular segment groups.

## Why is this important?

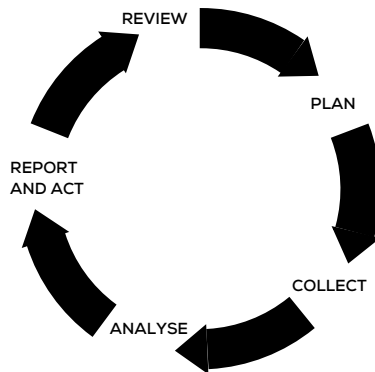
The knowledge you gain about your audiences can help you to use evidence to:-

- Make decisions about resources
- Monitor your performance against targets
- Increase income
- Build and diversify audiences to better reflect your population
- Make improvements to your offer
- Increase frequency of visits
- Increase visitor engagement with your organisation which should increase participation and support
- Be more relevant to today's audiences
- Showcase the impact you make
- Benchmark your performance against your peers
- Answer questions about your work from funders, stakeholders, local politicians
- Improve your funding applications and reports to funders
- Make a strong case for Accreditation and/or National Portfolio Organisation status
- Make your organisation more resilient

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## A PROCESS TO FOLLOW

To really get an understanding of your audience, rather than just collecting some numbers, you need to follow a simple process. This will give you insight that you can use in your organisation and be part of your business planning cycle.



We'll take you through this process here, beginning with planning.

### PLANNING

#### i. What issue or question do you want to address?

This is your starting point. What is it you want to tackle? For some organisations it might be a need to increase admissions income; for others it's a wish to understand why some events or programmes are not popular; maybe you have been asked by a local politician what you are doing for their constituents but don't know what proportion of your visitors live there; do you want to engage with a particular group such as families, young people, or people with disabilities; or to better reflect your local population's ethnic make-up ?

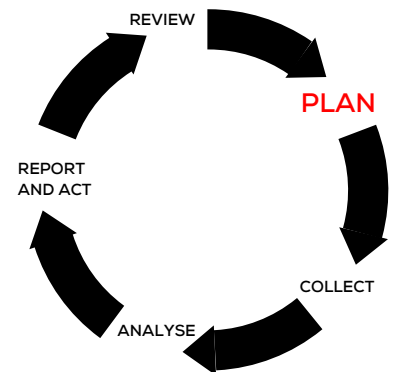
Focus on the issue(s) you want to address and keep this in mind throughout your programme of research.

#### ii. What is your research question / aim?

Now it's time to refine your issue into research questions. There's a huge temptation once you start to gather data that you get carried away and ask dozens of questions. The danger with this is that you irritate your participants with a 20-question survey when 4 or 5 would do, and that you lose focus on the issue you want to address. This is why starting with your key issue and research questions is so important.

Remember - only capture data that is useful and will help you make decisions, not just what is interesting.

Consider the issue you want to address. What are the headline questions you need answers for to be able to tackle this? For example - who is already visiting and what would encourage them



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to visit or engage with us more? Why do some local people visit us once and don't return? Are there local schools who don't visit us but who do visit other museums in the area?

### iii. So, what data to gather?

In many cases you will want to use a mix of quantitative data and qualitative information.

Starting with quantitative data, you could look to your marketplace to understand the context in which you're working or to similar organisations to give yourself a benchmark. For example, you could compare your visitor demographics with those of your local population to see if you reflect these characteristics. You could have a look at national data on the percentage of people in the UK who visit museums, galleries and heritage sites to give context to your overall potential market. Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) within the NHS often have local population statistics on their website that give you more context about the key issues facing the people who live close by, such as levels of deprivation and public health and wellbeing.



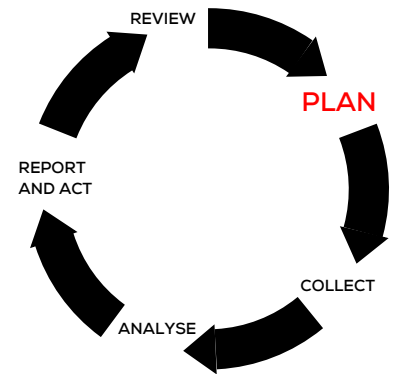
© Campaign Creators on Unsplash

To get a picture of the national data around cultural, arts and heritage engagement, have a look at online data resources such as the annual 'Taking Part' survey that the Department for Culture Media and Sport deliver, or the Scottish Household

Survey. Both talk to large samples of people about their leisure time and interests - see links in the Appendix.

You can also explore secondary research to gather data about the population in your local area by looking at Census reports, Public Health data, and deprivation indices - see links in the Appendix.

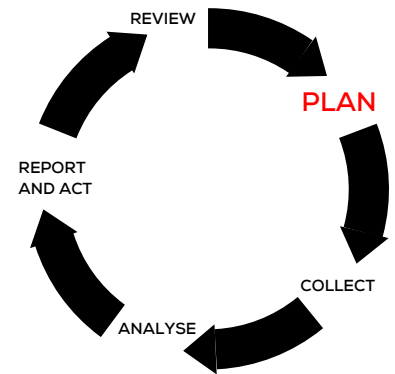
Qualitative data will help add colour to the outline information that quantitative data can bring you. It identifies themes and gives a flavour to your visitor profiles. It's a way of gathering responses to ideas and plans, and gathering feedback on your programmes and visitor offer.



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There are many ways to build up your knowledge of visitor profile, for instance:-

- Demographic data (e.g. age, gender, ethnicity, disability, economic status, life-stage, public health issues, deprivation indices);
- Visit behaviour (frequency, length of visit, who they visit with, what they go and see, how much they spend);
- Attitudinal and motivational information (e.g. what their motivations are for visiting, such as social or educational, or their attitudes to specific elements of a visit);
- Geoanalysis and geodemographic profiling (a way to classify types of customers based on the sorts of residential areas they have been drawn from using postcodes, e.g. CACI's ACORN and Experian's MOSAIC);
- You can also pay for an Area Profile report from the Audience Agency which is a detailed summary of data relating to a catchment area (based on your selected drivetime area) and the demographics and cultural engagement of the people who live in it <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/off-the-shelf/area-profile-reports>
- Segmentation models that use a mix of these approaches with an emphasis on cultural and arts profiles (e.g. Audience Spectrum developed by the Audience Agency and used by Arts Council England, Visitor Verdict developed by BDRC, or Culture Segments used by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre)



Audience Spectrum info

<https://www.theaudienceagency.org/resources/guide-benefits-features-audience-spectrum>

Culture Segments, MHM <https://mhminsight.com/culture-segments>

Visitor Verdict info <https://visitorverdict.com/how-does-it-work/>

For an example of use of segmentation, see The Lightbox case study in the Appendix.

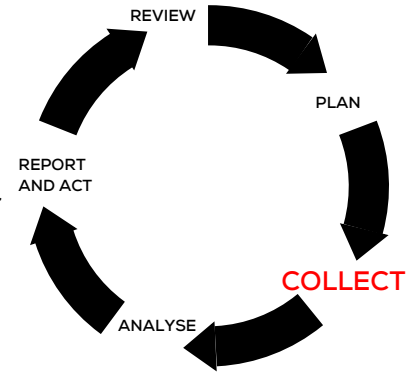


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## COLLECTING DATA

### i. Who to ask

Your existing visitors are the easiest people to start your conversation with. You have various points of interaction during their visit, at a ticket desk, in the café, at events, on your website or social media feeds, or using your email database. But it's important to talk to those who are your potential audience as well - why don't they visit at the moment and what would encourage them to do so?



### ii. Methodologies

There are so many different ways to gather data and insights. Here are a few:-

- Face to face surveys
- Vox pops
- Staff counts / clickers
- Observational research
- Online surveys



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- Feedback walls with focused questions
- Focus groups
- 1:1 telephone interviews
- Advisory panels
- Journey mapping
- Voting mechanisms - e.g. put a tick against your favourite exhibition idea, put a ball in a bowl, sticker on a list
- Creative feedback - e.g. draw a picture to reflect your experience



Each method has its place. Your decision will be partly based on resource as well as thinking back to your planning - what do you want to find out. A mix of methods is often the best way to gather both quantitative and qualitative data.

It's a good idea to develop your own practical 'toolkit' to help with this. This can include practical things like a portable easel or blackboard, or a desktop tree to gather feedback written on luggage labels. You might collect some magazines to encourage participants to make a collage to express their response. Or you might invest in a tablet so that staff or volunteers can use it to gather responses to an online survey both on and offsite.



Child's drawing of his ideal study space @Emma Parsons

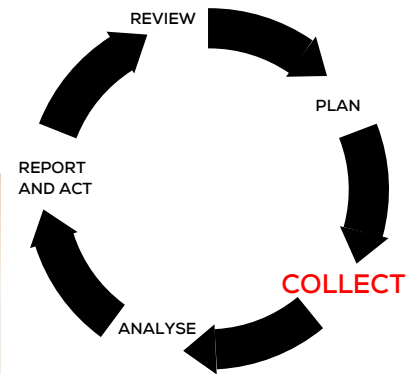
Online surveys are so easy to do now. You can use SurveyMonkey which allows you to collect responses through email links, or on your website, or using a handheld tablet if you have WiFi available. If you don't have WiFi you can still collect responses to an online survey using QuickTap which is similar to SurveyMonkey but will upload data once you're back in range. Both systems do the hard work of data input for you and topline analysis and graphs that you can use in reports.

### iii. Questions

It is useful to be consistent with the questions you ask and data you collect over time so that you can identify trends over seasons or years. For instance, do use the same age-ranges or ethnicity options over time so you can compare like with like. You could look at the parameters and answer options that others use so you can benchmark with them. Your funder may require you to collect specific demographic data that it would be sensible to use

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consistently across all your audience research. For instance, National Portfolio Organisations funded by Arts Council England are required to submit an annual survey including audience data - advice here <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-guidance/annual-survey-guidance>



Framing a good question takes time and practice. A survey full of open ended questions will be difficult to analyse and many people find an open question hard to answer if it's not in their day to day field of thought (remember whilst we may all find museums the most engaging of subjects, not everyone does!). So make sure there are plenty of answer options in your survey (you can always include an 'other' option to capture the answers you haven't expected).

Don't use jargon. Words like 'interpretation' and 'archives' don't mean something to everyone, think of other words to use. Try to make your questions follow on from each other, like a conversation. Don't jump in at the deep end, start with easier questions to ease people in.

A tip is to try out your questions with someone in advance, preferably someone who doesn't work in museums to test out if they make sense to others out of the sector. Ideally, trial it with someone from the target audience you want to speak to. They may well give you other options for answers that you hadn't thought of, or suggest you reframe the question.

#### iv. Sampling and recruitment

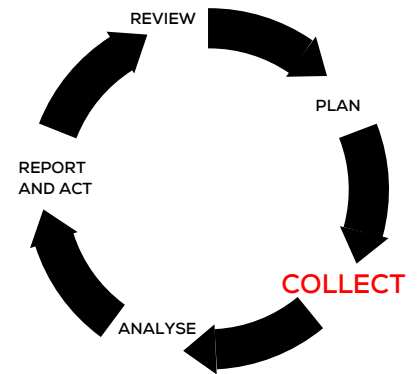
Make sure you consider your sample size and composition when consulting. We've already considered both existing and potential audiences. But many museums have very different visitors at

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different times of year, or days of the week, or times of the day. If you're doing a survey on- or off-site, try as best you can to do this at different times to capture a range of people. And try to make it a random sample if you're not asking everyone. So ask every 10<sup>th</sup> visitor instead of just the ones you think look most approachable!

Methods such as focus groups rely less on sampling - by their nature they are a snapshot of opinion of a few but provide real depth of insight. It's still important to plan your recruitment to focus groups carefully. Do you want to combine users and non-users in one group or separate them? A mix can sometimes be too difficult to find questions that work for both, but can work in the right context. You should use screening questions to make sure you're recruiting the people you need to take part - have you visited before, do you live in our target location, are you in our target age range, are you a regular culture-goer, for instance.

It can be a difficult task to recruit people to a focus group. You're asking them to give up their time to help you out, so do consider giving them an incentive to attend and make sure you explain why their participation is valuable to you - ask them nicely!



## v. Resources and capacity - what's possible, costs, no cost

So your plan is coming together and you know what you want to find out, but let's have a reality check. Some research methods cost money or are more time-consuming than others. Now is the time to think about who is available to help with this - can you involve colleagues, volunteers, local students, or do you have budget or a grant to commission some external professional help? Don't dismiss the idea of understanding your audiences because you are resource-poor - there are ways of doing this on a shoestring, and plenty you can do in-house using free online sites as well as some excellent freelancers who can help you to plan or just deliver some of the elements you feel less sure of, rather than pay for the full delivery of a programme of research.

### Low or no cost ideas to try:-

- Have a conversation - talk to your audiences, listen to their answers and factor these into your decision-making
- Feedback walls - these work well when you prompt feedback by asking a well-planned question and change it regularly
- Ask another local venue if you can set up a stall to talk to their customers about your programmes - try the local library for starters, they could be a good source of potential visitors
- Collect postcodes from your visitors at your admission point, collate and analyse them on a regular basis to build a picture of where your visitors come from over a year.

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Use [www.openaudience.org](http://www.openaudience.org) to analyse your postcodes for free

- Organise a focus group or discussion with your target audience - go to a venue where they already congregate (with the venue's permission!) and be ready with your questions, e.g. talk to parents and carers at a soft play centre, go to a teachers' network meeting, go to a knit and natter group, talk to a youth theatre group.
- Use an online survey service such as <https://www.surveymonkey.com> or <https://www.quicktapsurvey.com> and send a questionnaire to your database or seek permission from other organisations so they send a link to their database too so you can consult potential users as well as your own users



## ANALYSE

You've gathered in your data, now it's time to make some sense of it. Think back to your research questions again and focus on these.

If you've collected quantitative data using statistics you can explore the headlines - e.g. 37% of your visitors are visiting for the first time. You may want to look behind this headline too, for instance cross-tabulate it against other findings - e.g. 80% of your first time visitors live outside of your 60 minute drivetime. So a majority of your first time visitors aren't local. You might then conclude that you would like to increase the number of your local first time visitors, especially during the off-peak months when your visit levels are low and reliant on a small number of regulars.



Organising feedback into actions, @Emma Parsons

So to increase winter visit levels you could prioritise programmes and marketing to new local visitors.

Be curious, explore your statistics, question them, consider the wider picture they are starting to give you in their headlines.

Using qualitative data you will want to be analysing trends, strength of opinion, patterns, and looking at issues such as what people engage with and what prevents

them from doing so. A useful way to summarise this is to pick out the key 'issues' by collating them together. For instance, in asking a focus group or open survey question about why people don't visit your museum, you might identify common threads such as 'lack of awareness', 'pricing', 'lack of relevance to me', 'transport issues/location'. Give a sense of frequency of response too - you can pick out the most common response to open-ended discussions. Including direct quotes can be a really good way to illustrate strength of feeling too.

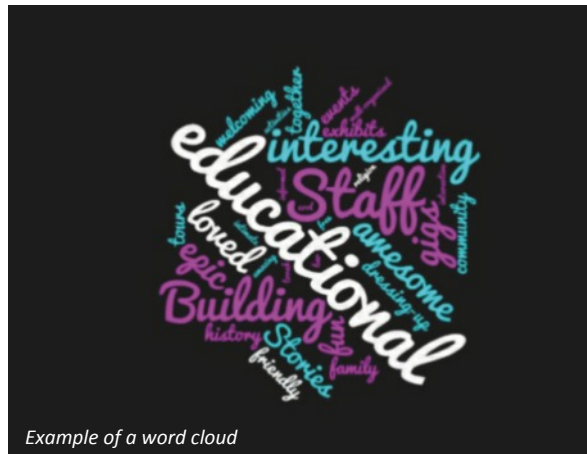
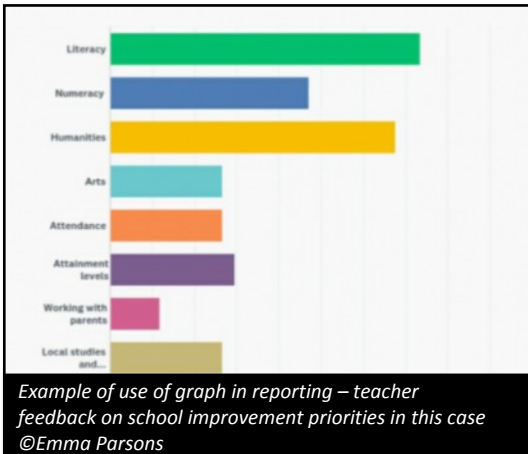
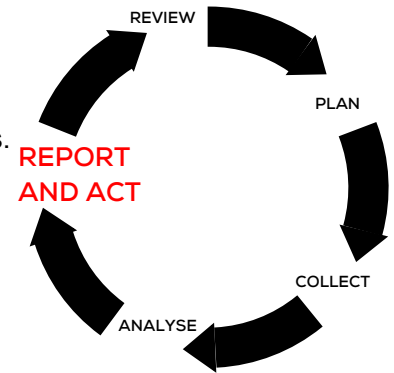
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## REPORT AND ACT

All of this work is no good unless it can be shared with your team, your trustees, your funders and stakeholders and used to inform your decisions. You will know the best way to do this in your organisation, but it usually involves a written report with some contextual information about your research aims, methodology, key findings and recommendations.

In some cases this might be a regular item at your management team meetings, reporting on the last quarter's data and insights.

Consider ways to bring a report to life. Use photos from your focus groups, use quotes, graphs and charts for statistics, word clouds for feedback walls, pick out key facts and encourage action. Think about your report's audience. Will they read it all, or just a summary? In the case of the latter, pick out a couple of key quotes that illustrate your findings, back these up with 3 or 4 statistics and a strong image plus short recommended actions. Make sure you do have all the detailed findings and methodology available should they request them.



If you present this to your management team, do keep the colleagues who helped you informed too. These may be volunteers or students as well as your team.

It's good practice to consider letting your participants know how their opinions will be heard and what decisions these will form a part of. For instance, if you speak to a group of school children, go back and let them know that their ideas are going to form part of your new learning spaces. It builds your relationship with them, and the teacher is more likely to say yes next time you want to involve them in your work.

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## REVIEW

Time to reflect on what we've done is always precious in a busy work environment but so valuable. Try to involve everyone in a short discussion about what worked well and less well so that you can make improvements next time. Think about the budget you've spent, and the time resource needed and whether this can be changed in the future. Did you make changes as a result of your insights, if not, why not? How can you improve the process?

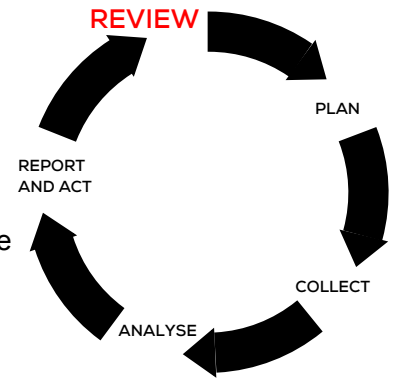
Make the most of any new relationships you have developed during this process too. Follow up with participants or partners - do they want to join your mailing list, invite them to a private view, organise a guided tour for them, discuss future projects.

### Next steps

Gathering data to better understand audiences often throws up yet more questions that you want to find answers to, so make sure you reflect on these, write them down and consider how you might tackle these next. You may decide that you want to develop the ideas that have surfaced through this process and put together an Audience Development Plan which would include your research findings, identify your future target audiences, include action plans to engage with them and targets to monitor to measure your success.

You may consider how to integrate your findings into your marketing activities, changing your messaging, your marketing channels, and developing your product and programmes in light of your new insights.

Time for a new plan.



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## RELATED ISSUES

In planning any form of audience research you must be aware of professional ethics. The Market Research Society updated its Code of Conduct in 2019 to encompass the requirements of the UK's Data Protection Act 2018 and is well worth a read here <https://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/code-of-conduct>

**Data protection and confidentiality** are absolutely key and you must be aware of this before you start your research. Be transparent about your research, making clear what it's for and how the data will be used.

Also consider any **safeguarding issues** if they are relevant to the audiences you want to talk to, for instance children and young people or vulnerable adults. You must also take into account inclusivity and access in your research, don't exclude people's participation by making your research inaccessible to them. For instance, any images or film within surveys should always include a text description, consider your language with non-native speakers, use images to convey future plans rather than lengthy jargon-heavy language better suited to reports.

Your experience of talking and listening to audiences may lead you to consider making this more formal. Many organisations establish **advisory groups**, often over the length of a project, so that they can be consulted regularly. This could be with a specific group, such as teachers, young people, or health professionals. Or it could be a wider reflection of your immediate neighbourhood. Whether you set up a regular panel or not, consulting with audiences should become a regular part of your planning and development cycles.

Have a look at the other Success Guides that AIM produce - the Marketing guide will be a good next step to think about how to use your audience understanding to good effect.



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## SUMMARY AND TOP TIPS

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Understanding your audience has moved from being a useful tool for your marketing team, to being a necessity for your management team in making informed decisions to keep your organisation relevant and resilient. Without it, an organisation is likely to flounder.

There are many ways to gather data about your audience, but it's important to do this with planning and consideration of what it is you want to find out. Use the planning cycle to order your thoughts and make this a regular, consistent way of working across your team.

There's useful information you can gather whatever the size and resource of your organisation. Make sure you analyse it effectively, keep asking questions, be curious and interrogate your data. Most importantly, use it to make decisions and act upon it across your organisation.

- make sure you collect data that is USEFUL not just interesting
- be consistent with data if you want to be able to compare over time and benchmark against others
- be agile - be prepared to test and trial ways to collect data, find out how others do it, give it a go
- think about sampling across your visitor profile and seasons
- go out to talk to potential audiences in their 'natural habitat'
- if you have a small budget, consider getting external support for part of the task, or to train your staff to develop research skills so that you can deliver it in-house in future
- planning is key - keep checking back against your research questions and aims to keep on track
- use the data - do something with it - don't let it sit on a shelf

**Understanding your audience is vital for a thriving, relevant, and resilient organisation, it builds evidence and reduces risk to help you make good decisions for your future.**



# APPENDIX

## WORKING EXAMPLES

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To show how this process could work in practice, we are using 2 example scenarios here to follow the process through.

**Example 1 - a town centre museum that wants to attract more primary schools to their schools programme and increase the income made from this.**

**Example 2 - a rural museum that wants to attract more visitors.**

### Plan

Our first task is to develop our research questions. For example 1 this could be:-

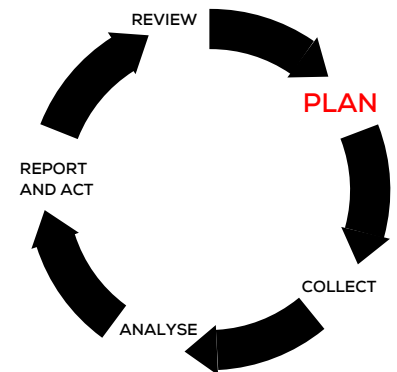
- Who are the schools who are currently booking, and what is stopping them from booking more sessions?
- Why are the schools in our catchment area who are not currently booking not engaging with us?
- For example 2 this could be:-
- Who are our current visitors and can we encourage them to visit more often?
- Who is not currently visiting and how can we encourage them to do so?

Knowledge of your potential market is useful in both our working examples. So for example 1, you could research the number of schools (primary, secondary, SEN, private) in your local area and compare this against which schools have booked with you over the last 3-5 years. Where are your bookings coming from - what is your catchment area? If you want to expand your market you ought to know its size first.

In our example 2 you need to assess the data you have on your current visitors. For some organisations this may purely be a total number of visitors each day or week. Some may be able to split this into ticket categories, such as adults, children, concessions, groups. If you have captured this consistently over a number of years you can see if there are any trends over time such as a drop in child visitors, or groups, or which are the busy and quiet months. But this data is not going to tell you much more about your visitor profile and nothing at all about your potential visitors. You need to add in qualitative data to help you gather more insight.

### Collect

For example 1 with schools we might decide to send an online survey out to our database of teacher emails, adding in an incentive of a prize draw to encourage take-up. As part of the survey we could ask if teachers would be willing to help further by attending a focus group or being on an Advisory panel, or taking part in a telephone interview to explore some of the issues in more depth.



# APPENDIX

## WORKING EXAMPLES

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In example 2 we could look at doing some face to face surveys with visitors in the museum as well as collecting postcodes on entry and some feedback walls. This will help us to find out who our visitors are and gather their thoughts on what would encourage them to visit more. We'd combine this with some research with non-visitors which could be a series of focus groups or discussions with potential visitors, recruiting them from local community groups, or from related organisations such as libraries, theatre groups, or historical societies.

### Analyse

In example 1, notes must have been made at the focus group and any follow up interviews, or it could also have been audio recorded. We would spend time reading and listening back, thinking back to the discussion and picking out the key points made, noting the strength of opinion amongst the participants.

With example 2, we have used more collection methods and need to spend time considering each individually and then considering the crossover between them. We would think about whether there are similar themes emerging, or different ones amongst different types of people? We will note areas that surprised us and nuances that are new to us as well as noting the data that now brings us real evidence of the gut instincts we held before.

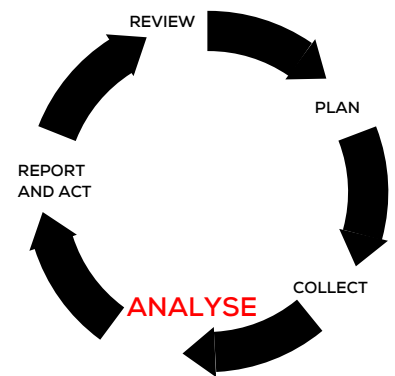
### Report

In both cases a written report to the senior team would summarise the key findings of the consultation, and could include graphs and quotes, along with some recommendations for future action.

### Review

With the schools in example 1 we need to review whether any of the teachers are keen to stay involved in the future, follow up any potential bookings that can be made, and consider setting up an advisory group of teachers to help us plan new programmes. What could have worked better, what will we do next time?

In example 2, there were a number of methods used and it would be useful to consider the pros and cons of each now, and what changes might be made in the future. Is there any follow-up to be made with any partners who were involved, organise a visit for their staff or customers, do some joint marketing or programming? Now you have a relationship, make the most of it.



# APPENDIX

## SOURCES

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### FURTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

#### Best practice and advice

Visitor Studies Group – membership organisation that brings together those interested in visitor studies from a breadth of sectors with advice, support and training events <http://visitors.org.uk/>

A useful guide to running focus groups from Citizens Advice  
<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Equalities/How%20to%20run%20focus%20groups%20guide.pdf>

Best practice note on research with vulnerable groups  
<https://www.mrs.org.uk/pdf/MRS%20Researching%20Vulnerable%20Participants%20best%20practice%20note.pdf>

#### Secondary data sources

The Department of Culture, Media and Sport's national survey, 'Taking Part' <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sat--2>

Scottish Household Survey <https://www2.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/16002>

Monitor for Engagement with the Natural Environment has useful data if your site includes outdoor spaces  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/monitor-of-engagement-with-the-natural-environment-survey-purpose-and-results>

Census data nationally can be found at [www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census](http://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census) Look at your Local Authority's website to find your local Census profile data

Public Health data England <https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles>

Public Health data Wales <https://www.healthmapswales.wales.nhs.uk/IAS/>

Public Health data Northern Ireland <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/public-health-statistics>

Public Health data Scotland <https://www.scotpho.org.uk/>

Deprivation indices [http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod\\_index.html](http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/iod_index.html)

# APPENDIX

## CASE STUDIES

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i) **The Lightbox in Woking** have made significant changes in the way they work over the last few years by investing time and resources into better understanding their audiences. This has impacted on the organisation's marketing and communications, but also their fundraising, programming, catering and indeed the whole visitor experience.



Back in 2015 the team knew from the paper surveys and ticket data they collect that their audience was primarily the over-55s and families with young children. They wanted to attract more younger audiences - in this case adults under 40. With the help of a Hallmark Grant from AIM, the team worked with a research agency to consult attenders and non-attenders in this age bracket.

Surveys were done with the Lightbox's database and with people in the town centre, and a focus group was set up mixing the two groups. The team tested out ideas for events, pricing and branding as well as asking what would encourage the participants to visit.

The findings were illuminating and the team developed new late night programmes in response. By understanding the behaviour and preferences of this new audience, the Lightbox team have had the confidence to develop and test new ideas and keep learning from each experience.

At Lightbox, the need to take audience knowledge seriously led to them exploring different ways to use their customer databases to capture data and use it in a targeted way. They decided to use a segmentation model and chose 'Culture Segments' from Morris Hargreaves McIntyre (MHM) as they found it easy to use and find the back-up support of workshops and training valuable. This way of segmenting their audience has given them insights into how best to communicate with the different groups. Their copywriting style and content of e-newsletters has changed to suit each group, with a resulting increase in click-throughs and bookings proving that the system has a direct return on their investment.

The team are now looking to secure a grant to enable them to improve their in-house audience research to feed into their Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems.

# APPENDIX

## CASE STUDIES

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Pru Shackley, Operations Manager at the Lightbox, said "*Understanding our audiences will never be finished, it's an ongoing process, and it's vital to the health of our whole organisation.*"

ii) **Ellisland Farm in Dumfries** was home to Robert Burns and is run by a Manager and a team of volunteers. The team secured a Resilient Heritage grant from the Heritage Lottery in 2019 to explore its future sustainability. Part of this was to better understand its current and potential audiences and to make this sustainable with limited resources beyond the life of the grant.

A number of ideas to consult with audiences were tested and delivered including collecting visitor postcodes and online surveys.

The venue charges admission so with every ticket sale, visitors were asked for their postcode and this was recorded daily. Each month the postcodes were gathered and recorded on a spreadsheet. This data is analysed by the Museum Manager and is giving the management team data about geographical spread and reach that had previously been anecdotal. A presentation of the data to the Friends Committee opened their eyes to the need to offer more changing programmes to attract more local visitors outside of the high season.

Burns enthusiasts have always been seen as a key audience for the Farm so their views on its future are important to gather. With this audience spread around the world, the team approached the Robert Burns World Federation to help them consult this group. The Federation sent an email to their database to ask members to complete an online survey, and the Ellisland team gathered hundreds of responses with positive support for future changes and indeed some pledges for future financial support. The consultation was a really positive step, and something that can be replicated by the team as their plans develop over the next few years.



# APPENDIX

## CASE STUDIES

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iii) **Manchester Jewish Museum** wanted to ask potential visitors what themes and collections might engage them in their new galleries. In previous consultation they had found that many potential visitors were unsure about the museum's content being relevant to their lives.

The small team put together a suitcase with handling objects and got agreement from 4 museums and galleries in the centre of Manchester to spend time in their venues talking to their visitors with the suitcase objects providing a 'way in' to the discussion. This happened over a number of weeks and the team wrote up their findings after each session.

The insights helped them decide on the main interpretation themes for the new displays, focusing on the personal and making connections across faiths and communities to tell stories that are common to many.

Food and music came out as themes that can be shared by the huge range of communities who live close to the museum, and are now a key part of their event programming. By understanding what would engage their potential audience, the museum has hit a rich insight which is informing their whole organisation.



*Consulting visitors using a suitcase of objects, ©Manchester Jewish Museum*

# APPENDIX

## CASE STUDIES

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iv) **The Wordsworth Trust in Grasmere** wanted to review how the visitor tours of Dove Cottage were working and could be developed in the future. The staff decided to test out different ideas so visitors could respond to an experience rather than just a written list of ideas.

Half a dozen different themes were developed, and the staff and volunteers used observational research techniques to gather insight from the visitors' experience as it happened. This was backed up with a short survey with visitors after the tours.

The decision was made to offer 4 different tours as visitors expressed a wish to have choice to reflect different interests and knowledge levels - some with a focus on personal stories and day to day life, others looking at the poetry created by Wordsworth in that place. The research done by the team gave them both the evidence and the confidence to make these changes.



©The Wordsworth Trust

# APPENDIX

## CASE STUDIES

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v) **The Museum of Cardiff** had an AIM Hallmarks grant to deliver a project called "Reaching the new user" to support the team to increase visitor numbers. The project commissioned an external consultant who began with desk research to gather data on the market using published tourism data about heritage tourists and museum visitor profiles. The Museum then added some questions into the annual residents survey delivered by Cardiff Council ('Ask Cardiff'), to explore who had visited the Museum and if not, why. With just two survey questions the team collected data to enable them to develop a marketing plan with the consultant, targeting groups most likely to visit in future to make their limited budgets work more effectively.







### About the author

Emma Parsons is a freelance Arts and Heritage Consultant who aims to put audiences at the heart of planning.

She started her career in museums and galleries in the 1990s, working in project development, fundraising, and marketing roles.

In 2007 she set up her consultancy and specialises in Audience Development, Consultation, and Lottery bids.

She is a mentor for the National Lottery Heritage Fund and a Board Member of the Morecambe Bay Partnership.

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