

Open Up — museums for everyone

Factors for success checklist

To spark discussion about how best to develop greater visitor diversity in your museum.

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20 museums across all four countries of the UK

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AIM: Association of Independent Museums, MA: Museums Association, Arts Council England, the Museum Libraries and Archives Division of the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland, National Museums Northern Ireland and the Heritage Lottery Fund

Introduction

Within an increasingly diverse society how might UK museums grow attendance and engagement?

The sector has been talking about diversity for so long. How do we move beyond talk to action in increasing diversity, inclusion and equity? How might we start to make real and lasting change in the museums sector?

The Open Up project draws together effective practice from museums across the UK that are pioneers in opening up their organisations and developing relationships with a diverse range of visitors. You can read their stories on our website:

openupmuseums.com

This booklet provides a simple checklist to review your starting point. Discuss with your colleagues, and note where you agree or disagree.

How many of the factors for success can you identify within your museum?

What might need to change to help you develop relationships with a diverse range of people?

You might also want to get hold of the Open Up guide which builds on this booklet in much more depth, sharing the stories of success, introducing some tools, tips and actions to help you plan practical steps to take in your own museum:

openupmuseums.com

Diversity and inclusion is led from the top with an inspiring, shared vision.

- We have a compelling vision and purpose, shared throughout the company which drives everything we do.
- We have a people focused vision which defines who the museum exists for and what difference we seek to make to peoples' lives.
- We have a vision which includes a passion for broadening visitors.
- We have a leader / board / leadership team who champion inclusion, show how they value diversity, and how they are seeking equity.

There is 360° commitment to diversity and inclusion.

- We regularly generate ideas to improve diversity and inclusion.
- We try things out, measure results, learn and improve, to have greater impact in line with our shared vision.

There is an open, responsive culture within the organisation.

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- We try things out, measure results, learn and improve, to have greater impact in line with our shared vision.

There is an audience-first focus.

- We place a focus on putting the visitor / participants first and thinking from the public inwards, rather than from the collection outwards.
- We have a clear understanding of who our potential visitors might be.
- And, more importantly, we also understand why they might engage. What interests them, what they value, and why they think or feel a certain thing.
- We regularly use this insight to plan how to adapt / improve.

Relevant programme is created and retained.

- We ask how the collections and exhibitions might tell, reflect and share the stories of the intended audience / visitors.

- We develop specific content and programmes which clearly show that this is for 'the likes of you'.

- We consider who the museum is for and whose voice/s are represented. Whose stories are being shared.

We issue compelling offers and invitations.

- We understand and communicate what makes the museum, its collection and work relevant to people.
- We explore what offers are relevant and meaningful for the people we're seeking to engage – we talk to them about what will encourage them to visit / get involved.
- We provide information on what to expect.
- We get the welcome right.
- We are evangelists about what the museum offers. We show passion and enthusiasm for the difference that we make for people.

Relationships with networks and community representatives are ongoing and nurtured.

- We work with existing communities, trusted representatives and partners.
- We pursue genuine engagement and involvement within local communities and target groups.
- We share ownership with them.
- We are persistent and patient, nurturing relationships over time.
- We nurture long-term relationships with our existing visitors too.
- We consider the social, communal elements of our role.
- We are willing to be challenged by external partners and open to try things out / do things differently.

Results are measured, shared, and used to inform further improvement.

- We take an accountable and transparent approach to developing relationships with a diverse range of people.
- We produce data and evidence to measure who we are reaching.
- We produce data and evidence to measure the impact we are making.
- We communicate on progress. Learning is assimilated, improvements are made, and wider stakeholders are inspired to come on board.

Join in

Join museum leaders across the UK in making change happen

Explore the full Open Up guide.

The guide has been created to help you to identify practical actions to get you started on diversifying visitors to your museum.

Try out some of the tools within the guide to ignite important conversations about diversity in your organisation.

Follow our five step process to help you develop relationships with a diverse range of visitors at your museum:

openupmuseums.com

Tell us how we might best support you to make this change a reality – who can help?

What's blocking progress toward diversity in your organisation?

What might enable your museum to Open Up and engage a diverse range of people?

Make a difference: share your story with a community of museum leaders committed to a diverse and inclusive future.

Share your case study, offer advice and support to others. Add your thoughts and ideas of how together we will make change happen.

The guide is just the starting point for the Open Up programme.

Sign up for further information and support as it becomes available:

openupmuseums.com

Partners

The project steering group is led by the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) together with the Museums Association, four other organisations who are funding the project – Arts Council England, the Museums Archives and Libraries Division of the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland and National Museums Northern Ireland – and with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

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AIM: Association of Independent Museums

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