



Creating an

Effective Audience Development Plan

An introductory guide to
Audience Development Planning
from The Audience Agency

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Introduction

All cultural organisations are expert in audience engagement – it's an essential part of what we do. But an audience development plan is more than just an expression of how we do it. It is a forward-looking statement of intent and key to delivering public purpose, to staying relevant and resilient.

The plan – and importantly the process by which we arrive at it – is a route-map for change, for growing audiences, increasing reach, building deeper relationships and doing those things to the best of our abilities, resources and the combined effort of our colleagues and stakeholders.

The Audience Agency exists to give people better access to culture and we hope to support cultural organisations to become more democratic and inclusive. We think that having an explicit plan is a major step in that direction.

It is important to say that there is no single, right way to create an audience plan. Every organisation is trying to reach different audiences for different reasons and in different ways and your plan should reflect the scale, resources, personality and purpose of your organisation.

The approach outlined in this guidance is in no sense then prescriptive – simply a suggested route through the important considerations. The guide is presented in a linear way, but in reality developing a useful strategy is likely to be a dynamic and messy process, involving much toing and fro-ing, experimentation and adjustment. We urge you to devise an engaging and flexible planning process in which your whole organisation can be meaningfully involved.

The suggestions here reflect the views and experience of The Audience Agency team and are based on a combination of documented theory. This guide is a simplified overview of our work supporting organisations to develop thriving audiences. The Audiences & Engagement team at Arts Council England have also inputted, and this guidance is consistent with the Arts Council's expectations of an audience development plan as an NPO requirement.

The tools and techniques offered are consciously among the most tried and tested, and are therefore relatively simple to engage people in. You will come across many others, and no doubt devise your own which are even more effective. We'd love to hear from you about any that help to move your thinking and ideas – get in touch with us on hello@theaudienceagency.org

Good luck!

How to use this guide

This guide takes you through several planning stages. At each stage there are signposts to further information to watch or read.

It shows you how to bring everything together to make an actionable plan that will help you attract the widest possible audience in imaginative and energetic ways. It will help you identify potential audiences for your project, and put in place the research and data you need to respond the needs of actual and potential audiences.

We have described the key stages in the audience development planning process and included helpful prompts and resources as follows:

<p>Check</p> <p>Main considerations</p>	<p>Evidence to use</p> <p>Different kinds of evidence an organisation MAY draw on at each stage</p>
<p>Questions to ask</p> <p>To ask yourself, colleagues or stakeholders</p>	<p>Tools & Resources</p> <p>Useful background, Audience Finder support, key tools (see appendix)</p>

A flexible framework

As we've said, what works for one organisation will look and sound very different from that of another. The framework we have suggested can be adapted for all sorts of experiences, artforms and types of organisations, regardless of scale, resources or mission – adapt it as you need to. The audience plan – and phases of the planning process – should be commonly understood and either integrated or used in harmony with other plans.

Use of Evidence

One of the defining features of a strong audience plan is that it is based on real evidence, rather than untested assumptions. All planning of course benefits from evidence, but in the case of audience strategy, it is particularly important to understand the world from the outside in. Without evidence (that the people we hope to reach are really within our reach) and without listening to their opinions, or tracking their habits, our efforts to reach them are at best a shot in the dark, at worst a waste of limited resources, and a betrayal of our communities.

Different organisations however need different kinds of evidence, and there is a great diversity in the level of resources and skill organisations are able to invest in this area. Broadly speaking, the higher the stakes, the greater the need for evidence. So large organisations with high revenue targets and demanding social objectives will need plenty, but a small organisation planning a radical change will also need to think about investing at the right level.

At each stage of the planning process, we have suggested what kinds of evidence would be helpful.

You will find this guidance helpful if:

- You need to create an effective audience development plan to support your business plan or organisational strategy.
- You want to review and refresh your approach and make sure it is effective and up-to-date.
- You want to develop a coherent plan for your whole programme and organisation over an extended period, rather than for a single event, exhibition or production.
- You have ambitious aims to grow or widen your audience but limited resources.

You can also use this guidance in conjunction with the [Audience Development Planning Tool in Audience Finder](#).

Although our guidance references the data and tools in [Audience Finder](#). It is not however dependent on them.

What are you aiming for?

A clearly articulated plan, communicated consistently across the organisation will make a huge difference to being able to grow your audiences sustainably.

The process of collaborating in its creation is a useful exercise in itself for an organisation to undertake. You are aiming to:

- Define a well-framed purpose
- Create shared understanding of success and a route-map to achieve it
- Create a framework for collaboration between everyone planning and delivering aspects of the audience offer, from programming to customer welcome
- Determine resources – budgets, people and skills
- Be an evolving plan - not a campaign or project – frequently reviewed and adapted
- Understand audiences in a differentiated or 'segmented' way
- Explain how you will retain current audiences and build new ones
- Include a plan for evaluation and review

Few cultural organisations yet have a long-term audience plan which spans a period of years in the same way they have a long-term financial one. This lack can hamper genuine progress in growing and diversifying audiences.

Signs of a good plan

There are universal marks of quality you might look for. Check for the following features:

- Everyone has contributed
- Clear links to other plans and strategies
- Direction based on real evidence of current and potential audiences
- Explains what you do to serve the needs of different audience groups/ segments
- Easy for everyone to understand and relate to
- Practical - not too complex to communicate or resource-intensive to deliver
- Aspirational - not so ambitious to be unrealistic, nor so unambitious it will fail to make an impact

An Audience Development Plan as a condition of funding

Organisations in receipt of regular funding from Arts Council England – that is National Portfolio Organisations or NPOs - are usually required to have an Audience Development Plan as a condition of funding.

A strong plan is also a sign of health that should encourage and reassure other funders, by clearly showing your commitment to access and inclusion alongside realistic revenue plans. It can support project or capital funding bids for the same reasons.

For The Arts Council, an audience development plan should show how you will fulfil their [Goal 2: for everyone](#) which can be defined as the aims to:

- Reach more people
- Increase range / social diversity
- Attract the least / less engaged
- Increase depth and quality of experience

ACE have suggested that:

“Contributing to Goal 2 covers greater and broader access for more people; engaging the least engaged; quality of experience; use of digital technologies; and touring and willingness to share audience data. An audience development plan should help most organisations to create strategies to do something relevant and appropriate towards each of these goals.”

We are also committed to promoting equality across differing socio-economic groups. As part of an organisation’s audience development plan you should describe ongoing approaches to ensuring and demonstrating that people within any of these groups are not excluded from your activities. You may, in response to any findings, go on to prioritise specific groups as part of audience development plans, in alignment with the organisation’s mission and business plan and with reference to their equality action plan.”

You can find out more about their expectations [here](#).

Your plan might also cover other key funding considerations and criteria, such as:

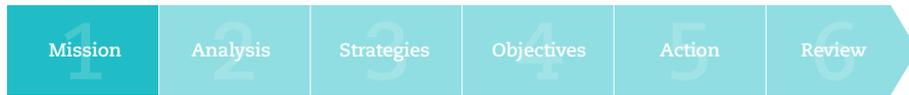
- Understanding and meeting needs of local residents, for local authorities
- How you deliver your charitable objects, for trusts and foundations
- The strategic significance/ legacy of a project, for any type of project funding
- The profile and behaviour of your audiences for commercial sponsors
- Evidence - profile and attitudes of (potential) donors - for resilience funding
- Delivering the engagement aspects of the “Creative Case for Diversity” for ACE
- Delivering context for data-sharing requirements of ACE

Planning Process Overview

As we have noted, this process can be applied more or less explicitly and every organisation will answer these questions in different ways. Many organisations may carry out aspects of this process as part of their overall strategic planning and will not necessarily complete each step, or necessarily in this order.



Planning Step-by-Step



1. Mission: setting higher audience goals

The starting point for your plan is to identify the main audience goals - implicit or explicit - in your organisation's overall mission or purpose and other strategic plans.

Goals will probably be a mix of:

- **Social** – involving specific communities, increasing less engaged audiences, overcoming barriers, contributions to civic life or community-building, instrumental impacts on communities, advocacy with stakeholders
- **Educational or experiential** – developing the range and depth of people's engagement, the quality of their experiences, learning opportunities, instrumental outcomes
- **Reputational/ creative** – building audiences for specific types of work, gaining recognition, collaborative ventures
- **Financial** – income from ticket sales, secondary spend, membership, donations

While goals should be aspirational and ambitious, they also need to be rooted in reality. You might start off with some untested goals and revise these once you have found out more about the audiences and communities you hope to engage.

Mission and Goals: Check

Consistent with artistic and financial plans

Programmers, marketers, educationalists have agreed audience goals together

Whole organisation aware of goals

Goals don't need to be 'SMART' from the start

Evidence to use

Internal review: previous track record, key trends over time, your strategy and commitments (eg to funders or investors)

Headlines from audience feedback

Information about new communities/ potential audiences you are thinking of reaching out to

Questions to ask

Who do we want our audiences to be in two to ten years time?

What kind of experience/s do we want them to have?

What evidence do we have of potential?

What evidence will we need?

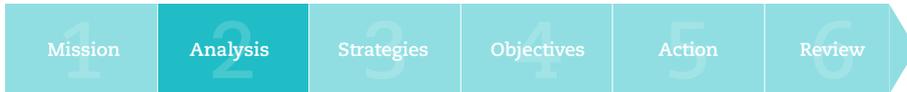
What will we have to change to reach that audience – do we want to change?

Tools & Resources

www.culturehive.co.uk

<https://audiencefinder.org>

It is a good idea to capture the views of the whole organisation on this subject, and build a consensus. You could do this as part of a whole organisation conversation, or as a series of interviews, or both. If you can, try to involve members of your board, partners and other stakeholders, as well as people who work directly with your audiences. It is often helpful to begin this dialogue by showing people who your current audiences actually are.



2. Analysis: understanding situation and potential

With goals in mind, you will need to find out more about the real potential for audience development. Broadly, you need to define what your organisation does or might do in the future which has the power to engage, and match these factors to the needs of audiences.

Situational Analysis

Start with your organisation's own situation, working as a team to identify commonly agreed strengths and opportunities. One way of doing this is to carry out a SWOT analysis to look at different aspects of their business and how it works:

- Internal: analysis of your current activities and their success
- Current audiences: overall trends, patterns of engagement, knowledge of needs
- External: who does similar things, opportunities and threats, changing environment
- Potential audiences: location, profiles, preferences and barriers/ motivations?

You may already have carried out such an exercise as part of business planning, and can refer to this in your audience strategy. Don't forget to make sure you are thinking about actual and potential audiences as a vital part of this process. If you decide to carry out a SWOT focusing principally on audience issues, it can help to cluster your strengths and weaknesses under the headings of the engagement mix – programme, price, place, promotion, content, involvement - and your opportunities and threats under these headings – political, economic, social, technological.

Research methods

Consider what research method will work best, common approaches include:

- Booking data analysis: sales, audience behaviours, location taken from a booking or CRM system. Hard facts about current audiences.
- Web data analysis: tracking online behaviours can explain how people use communications and what triggers they respond to.
- Social media analysis: tracking how people react to your work gives clues as to their satisfaction with the experience. There are likely to be a number of biases in such data.
- Data profiling: adding data to your own customer files can tell you more about your audiences' likely habits, preferences and whereabouts.
- Quantitative survey: questionnaire-based feedback from a sample (onsite, mailed, phone) gives you a sense of the number of people who behave or think in certain way.
- Qualitative: focus groups, interviews etc. Explores the underlying reasons for people's views and choices.
- It's important to get the right data in the right way for the right job. It is worth seeking some expert advice on research design and the robustness of the data you are using to make decisions. If you are setting out to reach an entirely new audience, you might expect to invest in some primary research planning to help you anticipate needs they have not yet encountered. It's worth seeing if anyone else has already found out things that could be useful to you as a starting point.

Key Tool: Segmentation

One of the most useful ways of combining your research findings is to create a clear 'segmentation' using insight to group people by distinct needs which you can respond to.

Having a segmentation can help you to manage the different and sometimes competing expectations of different audiences and stakeholders. Use it to create differentiated experiences, communications, and expectations for different kinds of audiences.

A segmentation of YOUR audience is not the same as a segmentation of the population like [Audience Spectrum](#) (though you can use it and tools like it to understand your segments). It is important you start with the different groups you want to engage with and build up a picture of their characteristics, needs and value. Here's an example of a simple segmentation:

- Regular (3+ per year) audiences with interest mainly in classic work, 55+, tend to be Audience Spectrum group Dormitory Dependables, travel by car across county
- Infrequent attenders for large-scale events, travel time 45mins+
- Infrequent attenders at music and new media event, under 40s
- East XX, attending as part of locally targeted partnership projects and programmes
- Independent tourists, visting local attraction
- Regular families (2+) interested in participatory activities, within five miles, tend to be Audience Spectrum group Trips & Treats
- Regular audiences with eclectic tastes including contemporary, knowledgeable about us and artists, mixed ages, tend to be all highly engaged Audience Spectrum groups

This venue has objectives for each segment, plans its programming and income targets each season with these groups in mind, has developed its public spaces to serve some of them better, and over time has built up knowledge of their behaviours and preferences. It sometimes split them into smaller groups. Get some more segmentation advice [here](#).

Analysis: Check

Clarity on what you have to offer now and what could change in future

External analysis of audience potential based on evidence

Clear 'segmented' understanding of needs/drivers/barriers of different audiences based on evidence

Evidence to use

Current audiences: box office data analysis, survey data, qualitative research, postcode analysis (available through Audience Finder)

Potential: catchment area analysis population profile, secondary research, Audience Spectrum segments, primary research or consultation with target groups

Comparative benchmarks for area/ artform (also available through Audience Finder)

Questions to ask

What assumptions have you made?

What evidence do you have...

- that this/ these audiences' share similarities?
- of this audiences' needs?
- that this audience is big enough?
- that this audience is locatable?

What will we have to change to reach that audience – do we want to change?

Tools & Resources

- Audience Development Planner tool
- SWOT tool applied to audiences (appendix)
- Competitor analysis
- Market Audit
- [Audience Spectrum](#)
- Introduction to research methods



3. Choosing Strategies

Having identified audience potential, the next step is to choose what approaches it will take to engage those audiences.

This is another useful moment at which to involve a cross-section of colleagues and ensure your thinking about audiences is fully aligned with programming and financial planning. We find it particularly useful to think about what we will do to:

- maintain existing audiences
- deepen/ extend those relationships
- engage new audiences like our existing ones
- reach new and different kinds of audiences

Key Tool: Ansoff Matrix audience/ offer development

A tool to aid planning what an organisation will do to retain and grow its core audience, while attracting new target audiences. A template and examples are provided in the appendix.

Note, it is generally considered risky to focus too heavily on building new audiences for new activities, so be wary of entering into the unknown and relying on this risky area. The strategies you select to develop new and existing audiences might include:

- Adapting or continuing key elements of programming
- Creating new experiences, programmes or offers
- Creating new platforms or channels
- Creating/ opening new spaces or facilities
- Developing opportunities for people to get more involved - eg curating, making or exploring your work, volunteering, advocacy, membership, dialogue
- Added value – from priority booking to volunteering
- Communicating different benefits, as part of new campaigns
- Pricing: premium to free, discounts etc
- Where you tour to/ who are your partners

You might want to use the Engagement Mix framework below to think about the key approaches you intend to use, consider too product development, the implications for branding and positioning, and financial planning.

<p>Choosing Strategies: Check</p> <p>Distinct strategies for different audiences and organisational goals</p> <p>Inconsistencies between programming plans and audience potential are negotiated</p> <p>Strategies include development of the <i>experience</i> rather than (solely) communications</p>	<p>Evidence to use</p> <p>Examples of effectiveness of strategies selected</p> <p>Cost-benefit analysis / ROI</p> <p>Evidence of audience needs, interests or preferences</p> <p>Evidence of interest among potential audiences</p>
<p>Questions to ask</p> <p>How far can you adapt what you do to accommodate new audiences and expectations? (programme / capital / digital)?</p> <p>Are developments affordable over time?</p> <p>With whom are you competing for audiences?</p> <p>What are the benefits from the audience perspective?</p>	<p>Tools & Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audience Development Planner tool • Ansoff Matrix (appendix) • www.culturehive.co.uk for case-studies



4. Setting clear objectives

Once you have decided who your potential audiences are and the main strategies for engaging them, it is useful to review your aims and set more specific and measurable objectives.

This will help to make sure that your plan is focused and deliverable, and help you set a suitable budget and other resources.

Objectives might include:

- Numbers of people engaging in different aspects of your offer
- Types of people coming from particular segments, catchment areas or profiles
- Audience responses, satisfaction, willingness to recommend, subjective response etc
- Profile and peer response
- Audience behaviour: eg frequency and range of engagement
- Webs stats for content engagement
- Learning/ experiential impact
- Economic or social impact in wider community
- Revenue – from tickets, café or shop, crowdfunding etc
- ROI: eg on every £1 spent on audience development

SMART Objectives

Specific - The goal is clearly defined and unambiguous

Measurable - The goal uses concrete evidence to measure achievement, eg through box office data/audience survey

Achievable - The goal must be something that may be challenging but isn't out of reach

Relevant - The goal must matter to your organisation and relate to its mission

Timetabled - Goals need grounding within a time frame, incorporating a delivery date

Setting Objectives: Check

Objectives are SMART

Set for all major activities

Focus on outputs/ outcomes not activities

Evidence to use

Put data already connected in context: so trends over time, track-record and benchmarks

Questions to ask

Are our organisational goals reflected in objectives?

How have opportunities identified from the SWOT planning stage informed objectives?

Tools & Resources

Trends on audiences (found in the National Data Section of Audience Finder)

Trends on geographical location (found in the National Data section of Audience Finder)

Smart objectives and meaningful measures

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Review

5. Putting it into action

The action plan translates thinking into every day practice. Choose a relevant timeframe – a three-year activity outline with a detailed annual or seasonal plan often makes sense. You should review and adjust the plan regularly as part of a cycle.

As mentioned, an audience development plan is not a campaign plan, though it should inform all your relevant campaign and project plans.

The action plan should make clear:

- Budget (based on costings)
- Timeline: when you anticipate doing what and the progress you are hoping to have made
- People responsible for actions/ strands
- Partners and collaborators
- Staff with relevant skills and capacity

The Engagement Mix

The Engagement Mix brings together the traditional "P"s of marketing practice with the "C"s of community engagement, to involve people in decision-making, creative participation, exploration and dialogue engagement.

Programme/ product – critically, be clear about what aspects of your programme are aimed at different target audiences.

Place – where activities take place, at what times, how people access it, booking facilities etc, social space. Touring companies have a powerful advantage in being able to select the right place for the right audiences.

Price – the right price and pricing approach– or free for your target audience (including premium/discounts/offers). Data analysis/ market testing will be more effective than straight research in helping you understand how different audiences respond.

Promotion – Online and offline channels and methods to communicate opportunities to engage.

Community involvement – forums for decision-making, volunteering etc.

Content – creative or exploratory content – live, online etc.

Co-creation – active participation in devising +/- creating, curating cultural experiences.

Action Planning: Check

Realistic timeline and resources

Clear who is doing what

Process for review and deciding to adapt

Evidence to use

Evidence of success of previous tactics

Evidence of audience preferences (Refer to four "P"s of marketing practice)

Pricing analysis

Testing/experimenting with pilots

Questions to ask

Are you that aspects of the mix are suitable for target audiences? What can you do to find out?

How can you make sure everyone who needs to understand the plan?

Tools & Resources

Audience Development Planner tool

"RACI" - system for plotting who does what

Useful frame: RACI for managing programmes across an organisation

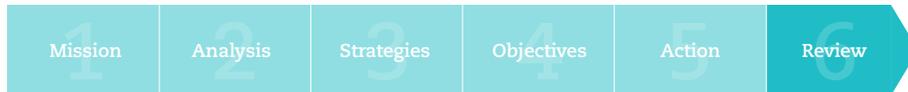
You might find it useful to break down responsibilities for different strands of your plan. A RACI makes clear who is:

Responsible – for carrying out each strand

Authority – ultimate decision-maker/ overseer

Consulted – whose opinions do you need to consider

Informed – who needs to be told what to do/ what will happen



6. Review, evaluate, adapt

The final step is to measure progress towards objectives, with a view to adapting approaches, or the goals themselves.

The SMARTer your objectives, the easier it will be to assess progress. It is of course worth exploring unintended outcomes, other observed effects, and unexpected changes in the landscape to get a full picture.

Think who you want to involve in a review and who you will share the results with.

Deciding how often you will review activity is important. Do remember even if you plan, review and reset the whole plan seasonally or annually, you can review some aspects of the strategy week-by-week or even day-by-day. These days it's so much easier to test out ideas and approaches rapidly, because we can get data so quickly. It can be really helpful to A/B test communications and content to find out what works best. Building regular testing and adjusting aspects of the engagement mix in an agile and responsive way will really optimise the plan.

Having reviewed your success, you can then adjust or adapt your strategy. Be open to rethinking your overall aims and approach. This is then the point to draft a next-stage action plan.

Decide at the outset what constitutes suitable evidence, how to collect it, and where and how to debate its significance. Make sure you measure what you value, not value what you can measure easily, matching metrics to objectives. Audience Finder is designed to offer a simple and effective way of monitoring changes in audiences over time.

Review: Check

Metrics should reflect objectives set, eg:

Financial – required revenue, margins

Social – specified communities (location or interest)

Creative – achievements in creating particular kinds of quality experiences

Evidence to use

Evidence from progress monitoring

Questions to ask

What does success look like?

Do you monitor the impact of your changes, and feedback to your audience? Your board?

Have you got organisation-wide mechanisms in place for acting on the results?

Tools & Resources

Audience Development Planner tool

Return on Investment (ROI)

Can be used to measure and evaluate the relative performance of different projects or activities. Monitoring the difference between spend and return as a regular metric can be helpful – eg marketing spend per £1 ticket revenue earned.

Glossary

Audiences

We use the word 'audience' as a universal term to describe people that engage with the work of arts and cultural organisations. The Arts Council is using the term audience in the broadest sense to mean members of the public that are directly experiencing the arts and culture. This includes those directly watching/ attending a piece of art and/or culture, this could be indoors or outdoors, and includes festivals, outdoor art, public art, theatre, circus, gallery spaces, museum collections, and digital. It also includes participants in the arts and those supporting cultural organisations as donors and volunteers. Other aspects of public engagement are also included, such as learning, or online experiences, or activities like arts and health or working with people in prisons around skills development.

Audience Development

Audience development is broad in scope and covers a large number of activities, approaches and philosophies, but is a term used to describe the way in which relationships between audiences and cultural organisations are extended and managed. It implies growth, improvement or change over time.

ACE definition: ... *activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences and to help cultural organisations to develop ongoing relationships with audiences.*

It combines aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, education, customer care and distribution.

The Audience Agency definition: ...*a planned, organisation-wide approach to extending the range and nature of relationships with the public, it helps a cultural organisation to achieve its mission, balancing social purpose, financial sustainability and creative ambitions.*

Audience development plan

We consider that an audience development plan is an explicit, suitably detailed plan for usually bringing about some kind of change and achieving a range of audience aims. These might be social, financial, creative and/or educational; most cultural organisations have the demanding task of managing all sorts of competing priorities, and a plan should help you to manage these. Actions listed in the plan might combine programming, marketing and communications, educational and environmental activities. It demands collaboration between those responsible for all these areas.

An audience development plan is not then a marketing or campaign plan for a specific event, activity or season, nor is it a programme of special activities, nor an outreach initiative. It should, however, set the context for such activities and inform a delivery plan.

Audience Finder

Delivered by The Audience Agency, Audience Finder has the aim of supporting cultural organisations to reach more people, new audiences with greater efficiency. It is a collaborative capacity development programme powered by data. Analysis combines customer and behavioural data fed from box office systems, online interactions and a primary research survey exploring motivations and opinions. Participating organisations access their reporting through an online interactive dashboard. Much information is available as open data. 700+ organisations have joined the programme, 500 of them now pooling and comparing audience data.

Audience Finder was commissioned by The Arts Council as part of the Audience Focus strategic fund (strand 1 "Understanding Audiences") launched in 2012. It is an ambitious 'Big Data' project for the arts that seeks to bring real insight and change practice. www.audiencefinder.org/about/ It continues to be funded as a service to grant funded organisations and a strategic tool. All NPOs are required to contribute audience data to Audience Finder from April 2016; the team at The Audience Agency can help with queries: audiencefinder@theaudienceagency.org

Audience Spectrum

Like *Arts Audiences Insight* before it, Audience Spectrum has been developed as part of an Arts Council England commission. It is a segmentation of the English population with a set of 10 segments that categorise people first and foremost by how they engage with culture

in a way that is geographically locatable. New developments include the profiles being as relevant to museums as they are to the arts, and accurately targetable to postcodes.

One of Audience Spectrum's primary uses is to enable cultural organisations to think about working with less engaged audiences and to develop strategies to help build these relationships.

Although it can be used by organisations not participating in Audience Finder, it is still a key component of the programme. All the data gathered as part of Audience Finder will help us to learn more about each of the Audience Spectrum segments, adding depth, knowledge and new ways of applying these insights. The more the sector uses it, the better it will become <https://www.theaudienceagency.org/audience-spectrum>

CRM - Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management is the management process that uses individual customer data to enable a tailored and mutually trusting and valuable proposition.

In all but the smallest of organisations, CRM is characterised by the IT enabled integration of customer data from multiple sources. This term is used as a description for seeking customers and developing relationships with them. CRM also relates to the nature of systems that organisations put in place to capture data and manage audience relationships.

Data Sharing

Audience data is not inherently useful and only becomes so once it is put to a purpose and organised, analysed or processed to that end. We tend to think of data as information from a box office system, or increasingly from online or social media, but it includes any recorded information eg mailing lists, names in a CRM database, comments in a visitor's book or emails/ data collected through surveys.

There are two main purposes which data serves:

- to provide actionable insight about audiences and non-attenders. Sharing data enriches insight by creating context. This can help to highlight opportunities for growth or collaboration, form benchmarks and realistic plans, and make the case for what we do.
- to enable communication directly with audiences or participants

Sharing data for communication enables different companies to build different audience relationships. This can help to increase engagement, offer the public a tailored service and make touring companies more resilient.

From April 2016, The Arts Council requires its NPOs to share data with one another, which creates certain challenges. See Context above. A website dedicated to this subject can be found at <https://www.audiencedatasharing.org/>

Data Protection

Data protection legislation is frequently quoted as the reason data from customers of arts organisations cannot be shared. The application of the Data Protection Acts and subsequent Regulations in 'custom and practice' does not support this view for most non-profit distributing charitable organisations, for the purposes of sharing data for audience development.

The legislation does not confer 'ownership' of the customer data held by an organisation. The members of the public 'own' their data. However, an organisation has a responsibility to manage the data they retain and to control its use. In this latter respect the organisation is referred to as the Data Controller, and their responsibilities are often complex and misunderstood. There are no issues in sharing "anonymised data" where the data does not identify individuals by name or address (postcodes can be shared) or provide any contact details.

See <https://www.audiencedatasharing.org> – it sets out clearly the legal framework, The Arts Council's expectations from 2016 and encourages dialogue between companies as to workable approaches to data sharing.

Engagement

We use this term to cover all the ways the public are involved with cultural content. Going to events or exhibitions, browsing content online, reading and research, doing participatory activities, taking part in debates, volunteering or supporting an organisation are all forms of engagement. It is the process of coming together to share in the activities or concerns of an organisation. We have used the "the engagement mix" to describe all the things an organisation does to engage audiences – including programme, communication etc.

Least engaged/ Lower engaged

This term refers to sections of the population least likely to engage with arts and culture, as identified through population studies such as the DCMS' annual Taking Part survey. Analysis suggests that not being engaged with culture (and indeed with many other public services and aspects of leisure) is linked to indices of deprivation, in particular lower levels of educational attainment, a more significant factor than lack of wealth, and certainly than ethnicity or disability. Tools like Arts Audiences Insight, now replaced with Audience Spectrum are helpful in identifying less engaged people.

Audience development implies the process of establishing ongoing audience relationships. It is comparatively easy to invest resources in attracting less engaged groups for a single event or activity, but keeping those audiences engaged requires full organisational commitment

eg continue programming relevant work, making facilities accessible; listening and responding to audience feedback and ideas; a warm welcome and responsive attitude.

For many organisations, given the nature of their offer, it may be more realistic for them to increase the range of people engaging with their work by focusing consistently on less engaged, rather than the least engaged groups.

Market Testing

A form of audience or consumer research which invites feedback on proposed activities before they go to market. This is usually done through qualitative methodologies.

Segmentation

'Segmentation' is a method where a given audience or market is broken down into distinct groups that behave in similar ways or have similar needs. Segmentation can help organisations to understand their audiences, identify a big enough group of people that are locatable, and develop a cultural offer and tailored communications that are based on audiences' needs. Population segmentation systems – like Audience Spectrum or Mosaic – can add depth to an organisation's segmentation of its audience, and enable organisations to identify new, untapped audience for their work. www.theaudienceagency.org/insight/segmentation-made-simple

Resources

Key resources include:

www.audiencefinder.org	For advice on collecting data, tools and applying evidence in practice
www.theaudienceagency.org/insight	For a range of how-to resources and examples of audience development and engagement
www.culturehive.co.uk	For case studies and a range of successful marketing and fundraising strategies
www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk	For research commentary and case studies on place-based engagement
http://artsfundraising.org.uk	Support in developing individual giving and other forms of stakeholder engagement
http://weareculture24.org.uk/projects/action-research	Case studies in better use of digital for engagement
The Audience Agency surgeries	One-to-one advice sessions on improving a plan – book a surgery through www.theaudienceagency.org/events/
Boxing Clever	An update to this complete guide to data-arts marketing is anticipated
Creative Arts Marketing	Comprehensive and updated, the definitive guide to arts marketing. Elizabeth Hill, https://www.amazon.co.uk/Creative-Arts-Marketing-Elizabeth-Hill/dp/0750657375
Thinking Big	Full of tools and tips, this is a guide to strategic marketing planning reference, on which much audience development process is based. Available as download from http://culturehive.co.uk/resources/thinking-big
This Way Up	A simplified version of Thinking Big for smaller organisations – sample available at http://culturehive.co.uk/resources/marketing-planning-3
Fundraising	New resources available as downloads http://culturehive.co.uk/tags/fundraising



What's in Audience Finder: a free service to all

Audience Finder is a free service to any organisation who wants contribute data and receive analysis on their own audiences. Additional paid-for enhancements are available for specialist analysis. Anyone who registers can also access the general information about audiences in England.

New tools and developments are being made available on a rolling basis – the Audience Finder newsletter keeps users abreast of updates.

Audience Finder resources	Purpose
Dashboard metrics	Comparative audience profiles, behaviour, location and attitudes http://audiencefinder.org/
National data	Sections exploring audiences: by area, by artform and by Spectrum profile
Area Profile reports	An enhanced and more detailed version of the online area information
Audience Development Planner	https://audiencefinder.org/dashboard/plans
Segmentation Toolkit	https://www.theaudienceagency.org/insight/segmentation-made-simple
Audience Spectrum	https://audiencefinder.org/spectrum Comprehensive information about each profile – what they're like, where they live, how to reach them
Donor Finder Membership Manager	A set of tools helping to identify prospects for individual giving and premium engagement
Show Stats	A tool to give a touring companies an overview of their audiences across a whole tour http://www.showstats.org/

Tools & Examples

1 Audience Development Plan wizard

This online tool offers a simplified six-step process guiding users through the process of creating their plan <https://audiencefinder.org/dashboard/plans>

2. SWOT analysis

External: What's happening around you that will affect the future? Who are you competing with? Who could you collaborate with?

Internal: How effective is your programme/product, marketing, services

Audiences: Who are they now, who are they potentially, what else do you need to know about them? How can you "describe" them in a meaningful way – or "segment" them?

Tip: Try to ensure that factors in the SWOT are related to audience focused activity or have some audience implications rather than relating to a general set of issues for the organisation as a whole.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Good things about how the organisation is now and things it has control over</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Weak things about how the organisation is now, or things it currently needs to address and has control over</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Good uncontrollable things about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External environment, market place as it is now or might be • The organisation as it might be 	<p>Threats</p> <p>Bad, uncontrollable things about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External environment, market place as it is now or might be • The organisation as it might be

3. TOWS analysis

A "TOWS analysis" rearranges SWOT to help form plans, and can be used in step 3, choosing strategies. Here's an example:



4. Ansoff Matrix: plotting audience and product development

When thinking about strategies, consider the relationship between audiences and products or activities, particularly with regard to whether they are: familiar or unfamiliar with the organisation's work. The completed matrix can be used to develop objectives from proposed strategies that seem most meaningful to an organisation's current issues and needs.

NEW AUDIENCES

Increase similar audiences

Same programme, new people

Aim: Attract new audiences for the first time

Strategies eg: Free or low cost taster events 'Test Drive', additional information and reassurance, incentives

Medium risk

Diversify Offer

New people, new programme

Aim: completely new programme to attract completely new audience

Strategies eg: consultation and qualitative research, outreach and participation projects, co-created events, local ambassador approaches

High risk, high cost

EXISTING AUDIENCES

Maximise current audiences

Same people, same programme

Aim: Increase frequency of attendance from current audience and bring back lapsed ones

Strategies: Well managed CRM, Improve availability and quality of product – added value, personalisation, rewards, donor development, advocacy development

Low risk, low cost

Product Development

Same people, new programme

Aim: Extend range of programme/offer to existing audiences, introduce risk

Strategies: Sampling/previews, programme development in line with audience feedback/research, cross and upsell of promotions, exploratory content, digital/content offer

Low - medium risk

EXISTING PROGRAMME

NEW PROGRAMME

5. Smart Objectives & Meaningful Metrics

Some examples of SMART audience objectives and meaningful measures for monitoring progress

SMART Objectives	Meaningful Metric
Financial: increased cafe spend by current daytime visitors to £6 per head by 2015	Daytime café take/visitors User satisfaction
Social: links established with 10 community organisations through new participation programme by 2016	3+ visits per year - logged CRM
Experiential: new users of streamed productions increase to 2,000 per production by Dec 2015	Online sign-ups, trace code tracked by Audience Finder
Creative: audience capacity of 75% for new work by 2016 through cultivation of core audiences	Box Office tracking Survey feedback
Social: 10% audience local estate, ambassador network	Postcode breakdown
Creative: 5% new audiences to dance through touring	New to dance through BXO and Show Stats
Experiential: Increase e-news coverage by X% and dialogue	E-sign-up and click-through Feedback, rising trends in social
Experiential: encourage dialogue among our peers	Dwell-time + tweets + referrals Sector publications
Educational: provide national online info service to schools	1-click referrals from Google

Short and Long-term objectives

Audience development can have both short and long-term impacts. Short term impacts are often immediately effective but can be resource intensive.

It is in the long term that audience development really pays off, once new relationships or behaviours are established. A constant flow of “new audiences” is not necessarily a sign of health. The kinds of objectives organisations might be looking at include:

- Higher levels of audience retention or frequency = higher revenue at lower cost
- Sustained audience diversity = risk spread, creative freedom, social mission
- Increased audience loyalty = donations and advocacy

6. Building a more diverse audience and the Creative Case for Diversity

Many organisations are making new efforts to increase the social and cultural diversity of audiences, often as part of their Creative Case as part of their funding agreement with Arts Council England. Clearly, this means very different things to different organisations. Their capacity for change will be determined both by the demographic make-up of their catchment area, and the degree to which the essential offer can adapt to meet a range of needs.

At The Audience Agency, we take the view that success in audience diversity stems from a commitment to changing cultural values throughout an organisation and is also affected by how that diversity impacts creativity and innovation.

Funded organisations are under a duty to ensure that they have done the best to address barriers that prevent individuals from engaging

with their work. This applies as much to psychological and cultural barriers as it does to physical ones, like those affecting disabled people. So organisations might be expected to ensure that the nature of their welcome, information, employment and curatorial practice is as inclusive as possible and does not project an elite monoculture as superior. Ideally they will go to lengths to identify and address negative perceptions. We observe that in themselves however these basic hygiene factors will not necessarily develop more diverse audiences.

An organisation setting a target to increase the ethnic, demographic or cultural diversity of its audiences may need to be more proactive.

We should also note, however, that it is neither ethical nor helpful to segment and target audiences on the basis of their demographics alone. Segmentation should be based on common needs and preferences relating to cultural consumption, not on personal information per se.

Ethnicity and disability on their own are not markers of being excluded from cultural institutions (many of the most avid Audience Spectrum profiles describe very culturally diverse groups). Both become a factor for specific groups and communities, when combined with the other characteristics of exclusion – low levels of educational attainment, multiple indices of deprivation. Proactive steps to building relationships need to get to grips with these issues in the round. So while it is difficult to imagine a tactical approach to increasing a generic “BAME” audience, an approach to reach a specific cultural community with similar needs and outlook within a catchment is appropriate and likely to yield results.

In short, as with all untested assumptions, we should be wary of second-guessing opinions, preferences or “cultural relevance” based on ethnicity, social grade, or disability alone. As ever, if we want to attract new audiences, we will need to get to know them with a real intention of responding to their feedback. A good audience development plan seeking to increase diversity over a specific timeframe is more likely to succeed by building relationships with specific, reachable cultural or networked communities over an extended period.



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