



THE INDEPENDENT CINEMA OFFICE GUIDE TO
How to Develop Audiences
for Independent Cinemas

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Introduction

**WHAT IS AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT
AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?**

Audience development: the secret behind every successful cinema

Welcome to the Independent Cinema Office's audience development guide. We've created this guide because we think audience development is one of the most important, most undervalued aspects of the work of cinemas, film festivals and community screens. Audiences are really what makes cinema. Unlike other artforms, cinema has always been a mass audience medium. But how do we stick to and expand on those egalitarian roots, so that everyone can access art in a context where its full impact can be felt?

In the last decade, the quality of home viewing has only increased, both in terms of the technological experience and the immediacy of access to content. Yet cinema has neither died off nor declined (just as it didn't under the threats of TV and VHS!). This says a lot about cinema's distinguishing feature: the collective audience. What's shown (programming) and how it's shown (projection) can't be ignored. But the cinemas that will continue to thrive are those that make an ongoing commitment to the audience they have, and reach out sincerely to include more people, especially those who have been historically excluded.

Audience development is the process your venue can use to walk this path. Independent cinemas aren't just places to watch films, but are about encouraging a deeper appreciation of art, encountering ideas that expand your mind and participating in a dialogue with others. All of these goals are better served by encouraging the broadest possible range of people to participate in your venue as audience members. Audience development is also a springboard to widening how people interact with your venue, moving away from a model where audiences only have the chance to consume films, towards a model where they are active participants and stakeholders in your venue.



Institutions inevitably have unconscious or conscious biases, reflecting those of the people who have built and sustained them. We all make decisions or judgements about groups of people based on our own assumptions. Whether we're aware of it or not, it happens all the time and can lead to stereotyping and potentially to discrimination. The end result is that institutions have a greater ease attracting certain audiences (often replicating the identities of the staff themselves) and ignoring or excluding others. While your audience is undoubtedly made up of different groups (all of whom exist at intersections of identity, rather than being defined by any one quality), everyone in your organisation probably has an idea – conscious or not – of what 'your audience' is. Realising that this 'natural' audience is a product of the type of organisation you have created and the people within it is the very first step to having a healthy, proactive approach to changing it.

The process of audience development helps your organisation confront those biases by being analytical and direct about who is not in your audience and being proactive about the steps necessary to include them. Done right, audience development is an anti-racist practice, a practice that fights ableism, homophobia and gender conformity, pushes back against classism and elitism, and ultimately empowers communities. That's a high bar to clear, but it's also fundamental to what independent cinemas should exist for, as well as being key to their survival; as a narrow audience base is not a recipe for sustainability. This guide gives you a framework to making that change.



Audience development is not simply about adding more people to your audience. It's about taking a strategic view on understanding your audience – who is and isn't in it now, how to shift this, and actively taking steps to make that happen. It also covers developing audience taste, which might be less about changing who is in your audience and more about expanding the types of films and experiences they choose in your venue. Your audience might be broad, but are you taking them beyond certain definitions of a 'good movie'? Developing your audience's taste for more than Hollywood and European feature films to include marginalised film culture might be at the heart of your audience development project. It's also a good idea in business terms as well: if you can establish an audience for a unique programme, it's also harder for a competitor to draft your audience. Otherwise you might find yourself thin on the ground the next time that a cheaper/more comfortable/closer local site is showing the same blockbuster as you...

There's every possibility that you're reading this guide because you're in financial strife and want to get more 'bums on seats'. The bad news? You're going to have to commit more resources if you want to solve this problem, especially if you're looking to sustainably grow audiences from outside the types of people who usually attend. The good news? There's every likelihood that you have these resources already. The people you work with now are likely able to lead this change if they're empowered and encouraged to see it as a priority by a leader. This guide will help you and them find that route, but it must be done carefully, considered and with structure, even if you are on a tight budget.

In a healthy organisation, almost everyone is involved in the project of ongoing audience development. Your front of house staff are there to guide new audiences and be the public welcoming face of the organisation to all who enter the venue. Your marketing staff have to find new ways of reaching out to and communicating with people. Operations have to think about the different needs and experiences of people when they're in your building or thinking about coming to it. Finance tells you what your opportunities and costs are and provides models for different approaches to attendance. Programmers think carefully about how their selections relate to and influence potential audiences. We hope this guide offers a roadmap to pulling these teams together, to developing a holistic audience-focused strategy on how your cinema runs.

Finally a word of caution and encouragement: change is always hard. The things we do well naturally seem easy and those outside our skill set require us to grow and improve, taking more energy, time and thought. So, don't be surprised that stepping outside your comfort zone will take up more capacity. Make sure you support yourself and anyone else working on audience development. Good audience development lets you focus less on things that aren't serving you and your organisation, even if they feel comfortable. That is eventually liberating, but it can mean asking hard questions and making tough decisions in the short term. Change isn't immediate. It requires an ongoing commitment rather than a fixed destination. But that is what makes working with audiences an engaging, stimulating process that is at the heart of healthy, successful cultural organisations.

About the contributors to this guide

This guide was written by Duncan Carson, Projects and Business Manager for the Independent Cinema Office. Megan Mitchell and Catherine Mugonyi acted as industry consultants. We are grateful for their work on this report and their expertise. You can read more about Megan's work with [Matchbox Cineclub](#) here and on Catherine's work with [Aunty Social](#) here.

LINK

[Matchbox Cineclub](#)

LINK

[Aunty Social](#)





Making a Plan

BREAKING DOWN YOUR GOALS

A Boring Truth: you need to plan

Already you have made a positive step in reading this section rather than skipping to the more glamorous parts. Congratulate yourself on making excellent life choices! It's extremely tempting to flit forward to the active part (the programme that immediately gains a wonderful new audience!), but unfortunately, that is much more likely to prove a failure without planning. Make sure you go into planning meetings with a positive, open attitude and give them enough time. The frustrating parts of projects are at the end when things have gone wrong, when you're full of recriminations about what you and the team could have done better. You'll be better placed to avoid that happening entirely (and to make necessary adjustments along the way) if you've understood what you were aiming to do in the first place and set realistic timelines in which to achieve it.

The first thing to do is have a very frank and open discussion about what success looks like. Scrutinise what you want to achieve and what you're not achieving already. On its face, audience development seems simple: you want more people to come to your screenings, events and venue. But there are a lot of different considerations beyond that. Often audiences are not engaging because they feel excluded or not considered.

One thing you need clarity on is what you define as an audience member in your thinking about development. This might seem redundant, but really probe this thought: is it someone who buys a full price ticket for a film screening? Someone who spends in your bar? Someone who regularly attends and has a stake in the building (e.g. is part of your members or patrons scheme)? Someone who uses your space but isn't necessarily a paying customer? It's likely that you'll have a 'ladder' of audience interaction that audiences are moving up, but it's worth expanding your philosophy of what types of behaviour you're looking for in approaching these projects. It's important to think long-term and for repeat attendance to be the key metric you judge this work on. This isn't about audience attendance but audience development, encouraging people to have a stake in your building and continually seek you out as an experience. Think too about 'engagement', whatever that means for your project: having an engaged experience with your venue can create a longer commitment to it.



Shaping your vision of ‘why’ is not easy work; it’s likely to ask you to confront some difficult or unconscious issues. Articulating this will not be easy, and may require you to move your organisation into areas outside its comfort zone. This is audience development after all: if the way was charted, you would not need to develop it. Just because you don’t see a particular audience does not mean they are not interested in the types of experiences you aspire to offer. After all, who doesn’t want to be moved, to grow their sense of the world, to be entertained? But that doesn’t mean they’ll show up to the way you are offering those experiences. Remember that audience deficit (the fact that they’re not showing up at your venue) is not the same as audience disconnect (they are not showing up anywhere else). Your project planning should address the assumptions that you, your team and probably wider society are making about the possibilities of attracting new audiences.

Answering these questions will probably mean either referring back to or shaping a new mission statement for your organisation. It’s very important that the project’s reasons for existing go far beyond the financial bottom line, funding aspirations or individual interests. There is very likely to be a moral or social justice aspect to this work, something that your organisation feels is existentially vital to its ability to thrive. If you simply want to make more money from people coming more often, this isn’t really audience development. The framework in this guide assumes that you are looking to be more ambitious. Otherwise, your focus should be on maximising the effects of what you are already doing, as that is much likelier to increase repeat attendance and spend per head. Audience development cannot have short-term financial gains at its heart, and it’s important to disabuse anyone working on this of that notion. Work you do in this area might not yield an ‘audience member’ defined in metrics your Customer Relationship Management system will recognise immediately. But prioritising these connections is part of what defines you as an independent cinema, a community space set apart from purely commercial impulses.

Small audiences from groups that have been historically excluded from your venue might be more meaningful than selling out every show (and can grow into larger ones in time). Changing the way your audience interacts with the venue (a new education programme, more community collaboration) can offer more roads to expansion than a few extra thousand pounds from the latest blockbuster. The pathway of audience development, which grows your venue’s reach and output, is constructed of building blocks that you assemble one by one.

SMART Goals

Everyone working on the project will likely have their own view of what success looks like. It will benefit your project if you remove doubt and get buy-in from everyone on what its aims are. Your team's diversity of thought and life experience will be your strength if you're looking to channel your energies towards sustained audience development. SMART Goals are a good tool to help you clarify your intentions.

SMART Goals are goals that are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. We're going to be using an example of a SMART goal below, and talking through how it works within that model.

'Our goal is to have grown our attendance by Deaf audience members by 30% in the six months after launching the project.'

Specific

Measurable

Achievable

Relevant

Time-bound



Specific

Your goal should be something you can express relatively simply, in one sentence or two that nails down exactly what you're talking about. Avoid abstraction ('more creative', or 'diverse') and talk in specifics that everyone can understand.

This example fits the criteria because it's pithy, it's concrete and, as a side benefit, it's also something you can approach a funder with.

Measurable

Your goal should be measurable. This is absolutely crucial, and may lead you to ask broader questions about your monitoring if you don't know the baseline you're starting from. We'll go into more detail on how to gather this information in the next chapter, but thinking about specific numbers and metrics transforms your approach. It helps motivate people to aspire to hit the goal and to feel they have taken part in a successful project.

In the example, the fact that we're talking about 30% makes it measurable as well as ascertaining which audience members we're looking at (Deaf audience members). Needless to say, you need to know the baseline of Deaf audience members you currently serve to make a relative increase. We'll discuss monitoring current levels and demography in the next chapter.

Achievable

Your goal should be achievable. It's tempting to be idealistic or overly ambitious when you're working with art you're passionate about ('Everyone should want to see the works of Béla Tarr!') and serving communities you care about, but setting realistic goals is important. Setting an achievable goal helps you understand your capacities and sets you up to continue this process, while setting an unachievable goal is ultimately demoralising. In addition, a failed, overly ambitious attempt at audience development can leave already excluded audiences questioning any new trust they have put in you. That's not to put a lid on being ambitious, but make sure you understand how much extra capacity will be needed to dream big and what that will mean for your audience.

Questions that will help guide you are: how much capacity is there within your team? Can staff be reassigned or new workers brought in? How much budget do you have to contribute to audience development without guarantee of return? What additional costs might you take on? What's your organisation's track record with these kinds of goals? How much adjustment are you going to have to make to change? Answering how ambitious you want to be in your goal is useful in helping ask questions about the methods you'll use to get there. If you have data on your audience already, this will shape what is achievable (for example, you're unlikely to double your Black audience if you know that incrementally you've only added 2% or 3% new Black audience members in the last year with the same budget and staff resource). In our example, we could say that the baseline was 500 Deaf attendees in the last six months without intervention. It's realistic to imagine that concerted effort could yield 150 more attendees (30% increase).

Relevant

Your goal should be relevant to your organisation's overall aims. If you don't have a clear sense of what your organisation's goals are, then this is a fundamental challenge to doing any successful work. But thinking about a specific project – especially if it comes out of passion within your team to change the organisation – can actually be a useful lens to review your overall goals. In this example, the organisation's strategic goal could be 'We aim to be inclusive and welcoming in our cinema to everyone in our community'. One of the ways that the organisation meets that goal is by ensuring that they are creating better provision for Deaf audience members. What aspirations lie behind why you want to do this project? Answer that, formulate it into goals, think about what else is in your mission, discuss it in depth with your team and then spread that throughout your organisation. Then you can return to the specific project and see if it's still relevant!

Time-bound

It's important to be time-bound, not (just) because it sets a Hitchcock-style ticking clock on your team, but because it helps you set a time-frame for a review of your approach. This ties in closely with being realistic. You need to strike a balance between giving too little and too much time. Too little and you won't be able to judge whether you've had any results like standing over newly-planted seeds and wondering where your delicious fruit is. Too much, and you'll have missed the chance to adjust, arriving with the watering can to a plant that withered long ago. In our example, we've set a six month time frame. Within that, we'd assume a series of smaller simple reports and evaluations if this was based on a targeted screening series, or a monthly report if it was based on general attendance of Deaf audience members. Something that can help is breaking work down into phases and setting periods for review. Hopefully you will have a broader organisational strategy that is time-based as well, which this goal contributes to.



Pinning your plan down

There are three considerations that need to happen in tandem with setting the goals.

What's the budget?

While it's tempting to look at audience development as adding to the bottom line, it's unlikely to achieve its ends unless you make some commitments to costs. There's a world of different costs you might need, and it's not always easy to ascertain at the goal setting stage what these might be. But setting a maximum commitment against potential revenue is useful to help develop your ideas. It's nice to think about an outdoor billboard campaign, but if you've only got £50 budget it's a non-starter. It's also important to factor in loss of earnings into this. A very common situation is that venues are keen to do audience development work, but unprepared for the fact that it is a long-term process. Can you afford to exchange a solidly performing evening screening to try something new? Being honest about this now will help you keep your mettle later as the project builds. Maybe you only have funding for a community project this year. That's fine, but make sure everyone involved knows that the intention is for this to be phase one in a longer-term commitment. There's always financial concerns to navigate; what shouldn't change are your values and intentions.

Different audiences will inevitably cost more to attract than others, so give thought to what the price of acquisition and benefit to your organisation will be. Converting middle or upper-class audiences to watching more event cinema productions is relatively cost effective because they are historically more engaged with theatre (so it will cost less to market to them) and the ticket prices are inflated (meaning the return on investment is higher). Attracting audiences to dementia-friendly screenings is likely to be more expensive since there are added costs to the logistical framework (e.g. transport to venue, developing relationships with local dementia support charities) and most of these screenings happen at reduced or no cost. None of this is to say that your venue should focus only on the most lucrative segments of your audience. But it's important to be clear on the costs so you can either defray them from other parts of the business or seek funding to help support your work.

Communicating the budgetary requirements from audience development at various levels of the organisation should also be a consideration. Explain clearly in your plan that although investment in audience engagement may not see financial returns in the short to medium term, in the long term, a developed audience base will secure a sustainable future for your venue. This will allow you to understand for yourself and your team what these financial commitments mean and why, and also communicate this to both internal and external stakeholders.

**Who will work on it?**

Setting a team to work on an audience development project from the start is key, even if not everyone is involved at every stage. Beyond the team you've selected, it's a good idea to let everyone in your organisation know what you're working on. That way everyone is aware of the ways you're changing and can contribute. Staff have more connections and ideas than you may realise, something you'll only discover if you let people know what you're up to. You need to bring your team along with you in doing this work. That's much easier if they know how this project fits into your overall goals.

Staff time needs to be part of your budget, whether you are using in-house staff or working with freelancers. Audience development will very likely mean people are working in new ways, so giving time for research, learning and route-finding is very important. In general, err on the side of generosity with time, knowing other priorities will appear.

When will you meet?

Once you have a sense of who is contributing, set a series of meetings to discuss conception, responsibilities, timeline and delivery. It's a good idea to invite the widest group of people to the first logistical meeting (the first after you've set your goals). Why? Because the wider group of people will be able to use their expertise to point out potential problems further down the line. You can always reduce the group size from there, or create sub-teams within the wider team to handle specific areas. You should have regular check ins and set periods to assess and react.

Here's a planner that can help you in your planning meetings:

SMART Goal Planner

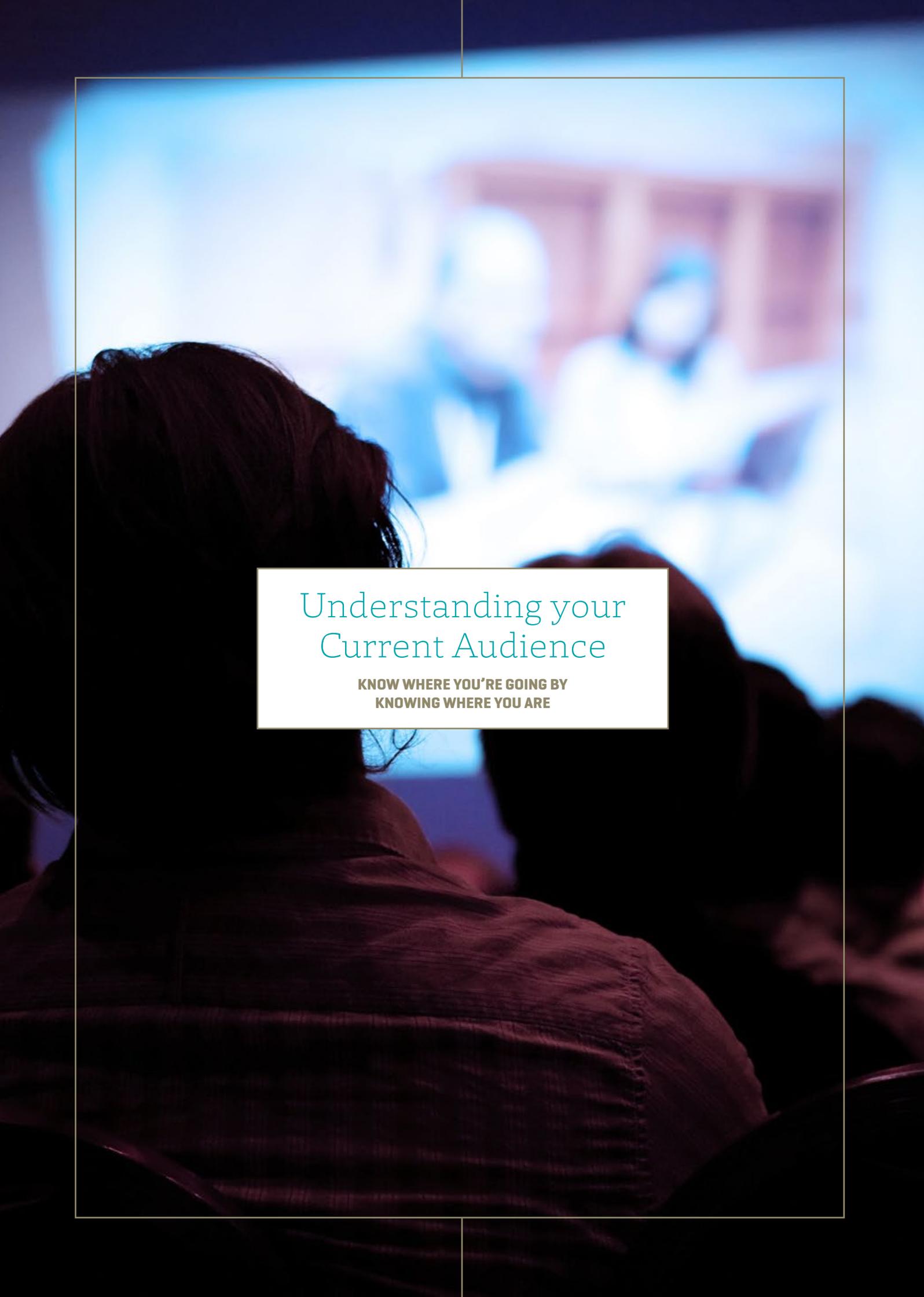
Project Lead	
Project Team	
Proposed Budget	

Specific	What is the goal expressed briefly and exactly?	
Measurable	How will we measure it and know if we've achieved it?	
Achievable	What are you benchmarking your potential success against? What do you need to consider before setting it out?	
Relevant	How does this fit into your broader audience development strategy and organisational vision or goals?	
Time-based	When do you plan to achieve the goal by?	

My SMART Goal is...

Project to be initiated...

Schedule of project meetings, analysis meetings and project review



Understanding your Current Audience

**KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING BY
KNOWING WHERE YOU ARE**

Getting to know your audience

It's counterintuitive but true: you can't know who you want to add to your audience if you don't have a very good understanding of who's in it already. You'll likely have an intuitive sense of what is 'your kind' of audience member (and perhaps base your programming decisions on it!). But it's important to pair that with as much relevant data as possible (without intruding on your audience) to give yourself and your venue the fullest picture possible of where your starting point is.

A word about surveys and data collection in general: with good reason, people are cautious about sharing their data these days. The last few years have seen an explosion in misuse of personal data, data breaches and a general raising of consciousness about data following the introduction of [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\)](#). Your organisation should have clear policies around data storage and gathering. This isn't just about complying with the law (though there are heavy penalties for breaking it): being mindful of why you're gathering data underpins successful use of it. Don't blindly accept off the peg solutions or templates for data collection. Ask yourself at each stage how that data will help you deliver better results for the organisation and your audience (or satisfy a legal obligation). If you don't have a clear answer, don't collect it. It's hard enough to find actionable insights in data that's useful without having less useful data clouding your path. When designing your survey, it shouldn't be much longer than can comfortably fit onto two sheets of A4. Beyond that, there's a strong feeling of audience fatigue and responses are likely to be insufficient. So slimming down your survey helps both 'data hygiene' and quality.

LINK

[General Data Protection Regulations](#)





Arts organisations are generally in a good position to ask their audience to tell them about themselves because their existing audience generally has a strong emotional investment in the space. The two keys when gathering data are:

To explain why you're gathering the data and how it'll be used.

(e.g. 'We want to understand who is currently in our audience so we can properly represent our community. The data is never individually identifying and will be stored securely, etc.')

Consider the incentive for the audience to respond.

Since you're asking for people to spend their time working on this for you, there should be some benefit for them. That can either be material or emotional. One approach is to hold a prize draw for selected participants (respondent details for the draw need to be separate from their survey responses). Another approach is to explain in detail the benefit to you from their response, as that helps respondents buy in to the venue and your ethos. Remember: people also enjoy being asked their opinion and feeling like they have a stake in your space.

You need to think carefully about how you'll survey your audience. There are always limitations to the approach you take to arriving at a sample, but thinking about inbuilt barriers in your survey method is a key step. Is English a second language for your target audience (e.g. refugees, Deaf audience members)? Make adjustments and also be clear on the methodology and its limitations when you're reporting. [This guide](#) from The Audience Agency has some good suggestions to consider and details of minimum sample sizes.

LINK

[Audience Agency guide](#)

It's also important to consider bias here. Firstly, in terms of how the sampling is done. If sampling is done in person, there's a high risk of affinity bias (the process by which we connect most easily with those 'like' us). There are simple methods on how to make the process more random (e.g. every third audience member gets polled), but make sure your team is aware of mitigating against their biases. Furthermore, you'll need to be aware of the ways that your sample of current audience members has a bias towards the status quo. While not everyone you sample will have the same opinion and is unlikely to be 100% content with the experience as it stands, they are a self-selecting group who have decided to be there. By definition, this group will have limited numbers of the group you are looking to see more of. So balance their view of your venue with a clear-eyed assessment of how you would like to change.

One other thing with in person surveys: spend time ensuring that your surveyors are friendly and approachable! You're more likely to get honest, more detailed responses if people have a rapport with the surveyor. Take time to practice the interviewing process, giving special consideration to explaining why this work is important to the organisation. There's every possibility surveyors will be asked why they are performing the survey and having a clear, positive response will help them get better answers.

Cinemas are harder spaces to survey than museums and galleries because visitors are much more likely to be attending under time pressure (i.e. keen to get to the screen beforehand and often keen to leave quickly afterwards). Digital surveying (e.g. via email) helps you circumvent this, but will only cover people already on your mailing list. So, it's good to look at a balance of different samples, though remember the questions must be the same across samples.



Designing a Survey

Here are some common key questions to cover in your survey (and how they can help you think about your audience development plans).

How far away do you travel to come to the cinema?

What's the limits of our catchment area? Is there a transport method we need to look at if we're looking to gain people beyond it?

How do you like to find out what's on in the cinema?

This will help you see how your current audience decides how to attend, showing you which channels you need to focus on.

What is your least favourite thing about the space?

Not every criticism needs to be acted on, but it gives you a sense of what your existing audience see as a lack. In an ideal world, that'd be the thing you're looking to develop... but it's just as likely that there's a resistance in your audience to changing the demographic (e.g. some older audience members complain about teenagers in their screenings). This at least informs you about what attitudes exist in your audience and whether you want to pander to those attitudes, tolerate them or reject them.

Who do you usually attend with?

Is your audience made up of solo attendees, couples, families, friends? If your audience is lacking in any group, you can look at offers to bring them in.

Is there anything you would like to tell us about your visit today?

A helpful prompt to what they like and don't like and any overall views.

What postcode area do you live in?

Only the first part of their postcode is needed. This will help you ascertain how much your attendance is focused on specific areas that can be mapped onto useful data from other sources.

What is your favourite thing about the space/our events?

This can be extremely revealing and overturn assumptions you have about your space. Do people visit your venue because of its amazing programming, or because it's inexpensive? Do people like your screens because of the projection or the seating? Do people like quiet and calm or a buzzy space? Do people visit simply because it's on their way home? This helps you promote benefits that you as members of the institution might not be conscious of.

How often do you visit/attend our events?

This will help you project potential revenue from new audience members, which is useful for budgeting. Hopefully patterns will emerge about frequency: are you relying on a small subsection of people who come very often (risky to alienate them!) or do a mass of people attend infrequently? Almost certainly it's a mix, but understanding proportion is key. If you have Customer Relationship Management software, you'll also be able to see this statistically, though there are always people outside of your data set.

Demographic data

This is absolutely crucial and requires a lot of thought. Moving towards your audience being (at the very) least representative of your community is an imperative for a healthy, sustainable organisation. Without demographic data, you cannot measure your improvements.

Let's look at demographics more specifically.

Understanding local demographics

A survey of your current audience will start to give you a sense of segments that are missing. Is your attendance skewed to a particular age group? Or a particular racial group? To establish what the opportunities are for your organisation, you'll need to look at the wider demographic of the area.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have a tool called [NOMIS](#) that gives you the most recent census data (at time of writing, 2011) specific to your area including the following details:

LINK

[NOMIS](#)
statistics tool

Total population

Age

Marital status

Living Arrangements

here meaning people over 16 and their intimate partner e.g. married, single, co-habiting etc.

Ethnic Group

National Identity

here meaning which of the UK nations do people align with or generically 'other'.

Country of Birth

Passports Held

Household language

not useful if thinking about the opportunities with foreign language cinema unfortunately, since it is no more specific than Welsh / English or 'other'.

Religion

Number of Households and Type of Accommodation

Whether Owned or Rented

Number of Rooms and Central Heating

Unpaid Care

both percentages of people providing unpaid care and how much people are in need of it; useful if thinking about an outreach project with carers or some kinds of disability.

Number of Cars

Household Composition

Households with No Adults in Employment

Lone Parent Households

Communal Establishments

e.g. how many people are lodged in hospitals, care homes, nursing homes etc.

Number of People in Employment and Unemployed

Qualifications And Students

Hours Worked

i.e. number of hours per week; useful in estimating how much leisure time is available.

The Industries and Occupations People Work in

A good place to start is with the [Local Area Report](#). This uses a postcode search so you can quickly compare different geographic areas near your location. Think about how you view the catchment of the cinema and try to align it with their definitions (e.g. wards, parishes etc). Hit the tick box at the bottom 'When I choose an area, include its parent areas (for example the local authority and country that it is within'. That loads useful benchmarks, but depending on what your query is you might need to do a specific query to compare. Ultimately you'll want to end up with:

- Your current demographics (based on audience survey)
- Local picture demographics
- National picture demographics

There will be many instances where you cannot map the same data from ONS to data you have from surveys to compare. Asking people the depth of questions in a census is a) a once a decade nationally budgeted megatask and b) incredibly invasive to your audience. Depending on which audience you are targeting, you can use census data to generally inform your view of the local audience, or specifically benchmark it against your performance. The national picture helps you understand areas where your region/catchment over-indexes (i.e. there are more of a certain group or behaviour than 'normal').

Be sensitive and specific about what you're talking about with your demographic questions in surveying. An area that it's easy to overlook (or oversimplify) is class, socio-economic status or social grade. Some of that data is extractable from your local area demographic, but is harder to pin down in a survey since the questions are relatively intrusive and definitions like 'middle class' and 'working class' are culturally loaded. [This article](#) gives some suggestions about being more specific about social class.

LINK

[Local Area Report](#)

LINK

['Can you quantify class?' \(Arts Professional\)](#)





To take an example of how benchmarking can be used, if Chapter in Cardiff, Wales was considering whether to develop audiences from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, the key data to assess would be:

- Canton ward (where Chapter is based) has 6.9% Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi population
- Cardiff (as a local authority) has 5.5% Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi population
- Wales (as a country) has 1.3% Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi population

From this, Chapter could see that they have much better opportunities than other areas within their city to reach this audience (there are also details on population numbers in these reports to give a sense of potential audience scale).

The effect this has is twofold:

- It lifts the conversation about attendees and the local population above the anecdotal (which shouldn't be entirely discounted!), so you can be specific about how your venue is performing
- It sets a reasonable frame for your expectations about what opportunities there are

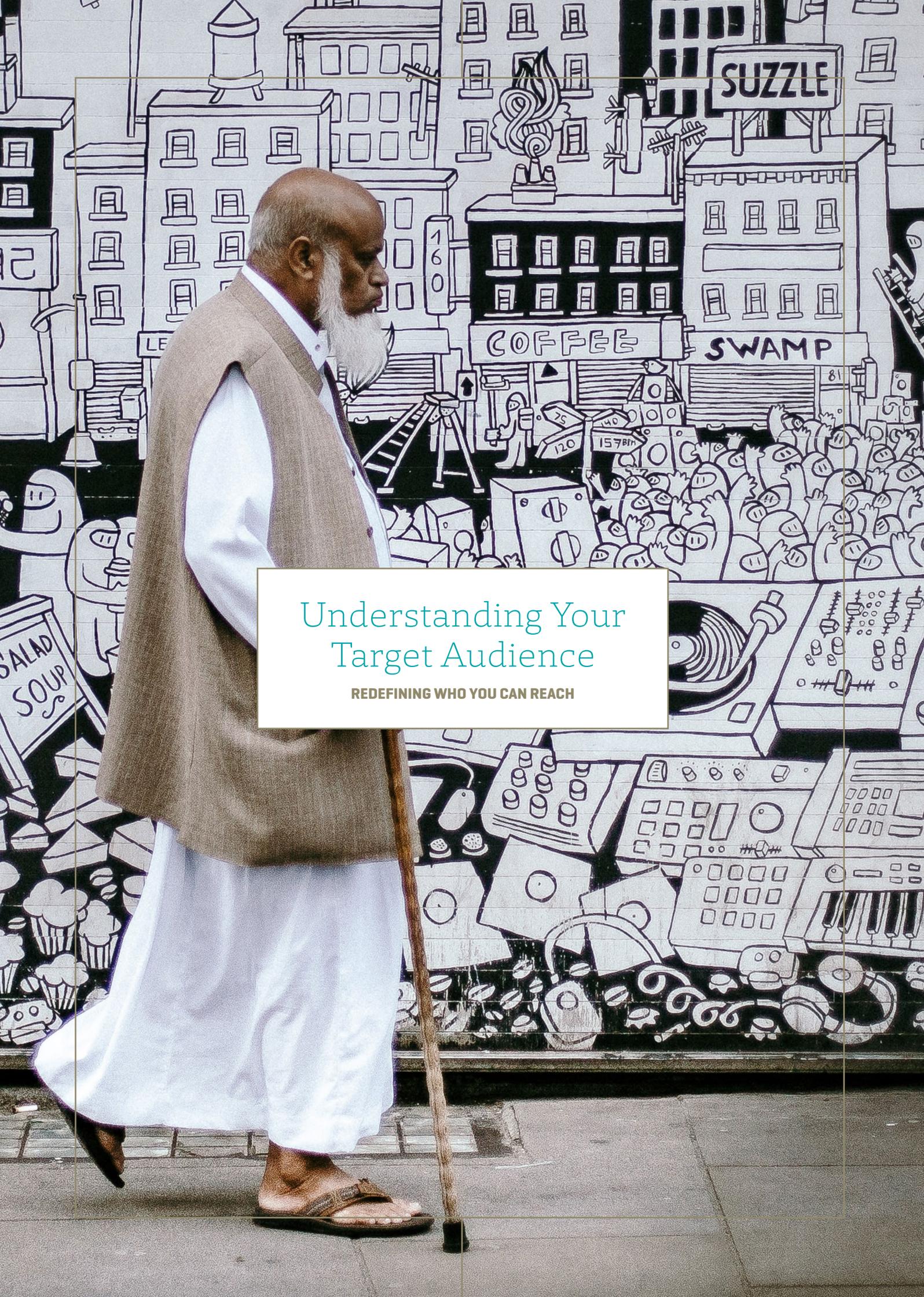
NB: An overall issue with this system is that Scotland and Northern Ireland do not have coverage for all stats, most notably when it comes to ethnic data.

If the above is beyond your resources, you could commission an [Area Profile Report](#) from the Audience Agency. All of this can inform you on audiences that your area has a higher proportion of and your strategies about which to prioritise.

The segment you're targeting with a SMART audience development goal needs to be specific and defined enough that you can design specific programmes and means to reach them, but broad enough that the investment of time and energy will be worthwhile across a set timeline (again this might be more long term than short). Be wary of targeting a group that doesn't have commonalities of concerns (price, cultural interest, access needs, spending power, etc.) because ultimately you will need to design a lever to attract more of these types of people by addressing one of these commonalities. People are much more than a set of demographic assignments. But the richer sense of who they are is seen when they've made it over your threshold. To get there, it often requires thinking about people in terms of groups.

LINK

[Area Profile Report](#)



Understanding Your Target Audience

REDEFINING WHO YOU CAN REACH

Conduct a project premortem

Everything has gone wrong with your audience development project. It's taken up a lot of staff time and budget, wasted the goodwill of the audience you hoped to attract, frustrated your established audience members and left the team feeling deflated. What went wrong?

That's the question you should be asking yourself before it happens. A premortem “asks team members' [...] to generate plausible reasons for the project's failure” at the planning stage. Everyone suggests reasons why the project has failed in an imagined future, leaving it open to discuss how to assess and mitigate these risks.

LINK

[Premortem guide](#)

Taking a self-critical view of why the audience you're after may not 'naturally' arrive in your venue should involve asking difficult questions, potentially about your core business model or who contributes to making decisions. Is your venue inaccessible to disabled or D/deaf patrons? Are your ticket prices too high, pricing out your working class local audience? Are you in a part of town difficult or expensive for a South Asian audience to travel to? Do young people not see themselves represented in your venue? Do your team members not have enough experience of autistic people's needs to run screenings for them? None of these types of problems are insurmountable, but they should be confronted at the project's outset.

Of course, it's also risky to go into this work making too many assumptions about your prospective audience and why you need to be proactive in bringing them in. There's a high likelihood that the fact you're struggling to recruit from a certain section of the potential local audience is because that group isn't substantially represented among your decision makers. The more fundamental question is about how you build that representation in your core staff so that there is a diversity of thought in your decision making. But you can bolster that deeper process by working with freelancers and conducting focus groups.



Conducting a Focus Group

Focus groups go far deeper into understanding your audience than an audience survey. For a focus group, you can select from people from the audience group you hope to attract and can ask them more qualitative questions with a view to receiving expanded answers. Done sensitively, it can also be a way to build new connections. It's advisable to create a focus group with both existing members of your audience and your target group to compare and contrast sentiments and understand the risks of changing your organisation as well as the potential rewards. One thing to bear in mind: a focus group can never be truly 'representative'; people are individuals, so a focus group can help sharpen your ideas but won't give you definitive answers. You need to have conviction about which insights to act on and are practical for your organisation.

A few things to bear in mind when planning your focus group:

Recruitment

This is absolutely crucial. How will you find people who can give you insights? The methodology is as specific as the group you're targeting. Perhaps there's a community organisation who already work closely with the group you want to include (this can also be a good way of starting a conversation about collaboration)? Or if you're looking for a particular postcode, is there some outreach work you could do (e.g. hosting a market stall for recruitment)?

Timings

It's best if you can offer multiple times of day or week to conduct your focus group. There may be times that will never work for certain groups.

Access

Think about how people will access the focus group given your target audience. Will you need a BSL or other language interpreter for those for whom English isn't their first language? Will carers need to be in attendance? What about child care or travel reimbursements?

Location

Try not to make people travel more than walking distance unless absolutely necessary. It might be convenient and inexpensive for you to hold the group in your venue, but you risk only recruiting people who would visit anyway, so meeting people where they are is optimal.

Quid pro quo/compensation

People are giving up their time, so you need to think about how you'll repay them. Drinks and refreshments are a good idea, but an honorarium is also worth considering. Free tickets is often something you can offer at low or no cost if your organisation has a tight budget (it also lowers the bar for people who have yet to visit and you can follow up with them to see what their experience of the visit was).

Privacy

You'll want to record the group in some way (either notes during or recordings). Make sure people understand from the outset why you're conducting the focus group, how their information will be used and stored (anonymously, for internal use only, etc.).

Some questions to ask in the focus group:

What do you do with your free time?

Do you visit venues in the area?

**Do you enjoy the cinema?
If so, what are the main things
that make you attend?**

**What stops you going to the cinema
in general?**

**Have you ever been to
[your venue]?**

If yes, what did you do there?

**Who do you think comes to
[your venue] if you don't yourself?**

People may be wary of saying why they don't like your venue but framing it this way may give a more honest read on who the venue feels like it's for, if not them.

What do you think of [your venue]?

**What do you think of
[venue's website]?**

**What do you think of
[venue's social media]?**





Creating a marketing profile

At this point, you will be gathering a better picture of what your target audience member looks like. One thing that can help you break out of abstract notions about the group is by using your survey and focus group to create an individualised marketing profile of your 'hypothetical audience member'. Some things you should have an educated sense of are:

- Which devices do they use regularly (radio, television, smart phone etc)?
- What is their daily routine?
- Which magazines or newspapers do they read (if any)?
- What do they do in their free time besides the cinema?
- What kinds of films do they like to see?
- Which brands do they trust?
- What do they mostly spend their money on?
- Who do they watch with?
- What's the tradition of film watching in their family/community?

All of this will become useful once you're planning your approach to attracting the audience.



Approaches to Audience Development

WAYS OF REACHING OUT

Routes to Activating Audiences

By now, you should have a good sense of who your target audience is. Next you need to think about how you'll adapt your offer to attract them. The routes to attracting a new audience are as different as the groups you're targeting. Below are some broad areas to consider as mechanisms for your audience development. In reality, audience development requires a holistic approach to be successful. Changing your programming without letting anyone know about your new seasons through marketing is unlikely to yield substantial results. Similarly inviting a new disabled audience into your cinema through events is not going to be effective unless you have also addressed the accessibility of your programme (higher provisions of captions, audio description, on screen representation) and your venue's physical space.

Working with new partners

Partnerships are a powerful way to invite new audiences into your venue. It's likely that there are already organisations working in your area with the types of audience members you're seeking to attract. Perhaps you're already aware of their work, or your focus group or other research has flagged them up.

There may be ways you can work together that are mutually beneficial, but you need to be mindful about how you'll approach working together. Meet the prospective partner on terms that are convenient to them. This is not (primarily) a commercial transaction but something that requires mutual buy-in, and should acknowledge that the partner has resources, skills and connections that you lack in your organisation. It is also important to remember that these organisations, although invested in working with the audience you wish to target, may be operating within their own limitations with regards to funding, staff or resources.

Build in plenty of time and start a conversation with them. It's important not to be overly prescriptive about the shape the project will take, since they will have useful insights into how it could work with their audience, just as you understand how your cinema currently functions. Discuss the audience you are looking to attract, how that fits with how they internally see their audience and whether there's a way for you to align those in a shared project. This process will require mutual education and discussion. This is healthy and can be a springboard for deeper, longer term work. But it is not a quick fix and will require attention to detail and a real willingness to accommodate and change.

Remember that if you are collaborating with smaller, less well funded organisations – especially those working with marginalised or excluded groups – they may need you to highlight ways in which you can support them too. We all understand the importance of cultural access, but if organisations are already stretched this may be a lesser priority, by necessity not choice.

Successful collaboration

Before the project begins in earnest, it might help to draw up a partnership agreement. This can be relatively informal, but will help clarify what everyone's responsibilities are and define terms (e.g. rather than saying 'market to your audience', it might help to be specific about what means they'll use to market to their audience). It can also lay out what the benefits are for both sides, helping assess if there are enough to proceed. Remember that it's important to share resources and power, credit the organisation clearly and be open to communication and feedback. Think long term and start small: informal conversations on their terms, with listening as the key focus is the place to start. You'll need to develop a useful way of working together and that's best developed over time and with flexibility, starting small and working your way up once the relationship is proved to serve both groups e.g. starting with an offsite series in partnership that could progress to an in-venue event once you have credibility.

Think about the legacy of the project: is it clear to both organisations what would be seen as a success once complete and how you'll continue the relationship if it is seen as a success? Being clear about potential next steps will affect how everyone views the relationship. As with all relationships, partnerships aren't made overnight. Start small, explain you want to work for mutual benefit on an ongoing basis and be prepared to adapt your methods. Over time, partnerships can become a core way of your working style and can radically change your venue.



Adapting programming

Hopefully your focus groups and surveys will have given you some hints about what films or additional programme content (captions, audio description) which might be missing from your programme to attract new audience members. Audience development through programming is a slow process and one that has to happen with other departments. Here's a few different approaches to changing your programming with audience development in mind:

A weekender or festival

If you historically have very little contact with the group you're targeting, focusing the work on a time-limited event can be a very effective way of making contact. Is there something you can do to support existing festivals or events? Encourage the organising/leading communities to take up space in your venue. You need to be very clear with partners that this is the beginning of an ongoing commitment rather than a siloed one-off. Design your process around encouraging repeat attendance. Think about ways you can remind your target audience that your broader work is for them, build retention into your marketing channels (e.g. email capture) and consider an offer that encourages repeat attendance (e.g. discount on next visit). Any short-term event that doesn't change the overall build up of your audience is a failure.



An ongoing series or a season

An ongoing programming series is a good way to test audience development, because you'll be able to see which events are more or less successful and look closely at variables, while hopefully gaining a committed audience. A sustained change of programming is more likely to wield notable results and have a chance to build an audience.

Looking critically at your programming as a whole

One healthy piece of work that can feed into other aspects of audience development is looking at the key creatives (lead on-screen talent, directorial, writing) in the work you're regularly presenting. If your audience is heavily male-skewed, what about considering a greater representation of female writer/directors/female-led stories year round (check out [The F-Rating](#) for a framework for assessing this)? Or if you have a low representation of Black audiences, what can you do to make Black work of all kinds a central part of your programme? Not everyone in any underrepresented group is necessarily drawn to the selections you'll make (just as many people outside of the group are interested in work that doesn't foreground their identity), but this is a broader policy in programming that can drive audience development.

LINK

[F-Rating](#)

Democratising programming

As well as partnerships, it's important to flag the potential for other voices to be heard on screen. Is it clear in your venue and on your website how people can get involved in producing a screening series? Do you have regular audience votes or offer other ways for people to participate in your programming choices? Are there independent film exhibitors or programmers in your area already working with your key demographic who you could invite to guest programme? Co-production is a way of working collaboratively with partners and communities to create things that positively impact their lives. It shifts the ownership, resource and decision-making power into the hands of those who will benefit. Historically, control has sat with the institution or programmer; co-production seeks to share this more equally. Battersea Arts Centre's [Co-Creating Change](#) project has some good principles about approaching work in this way. You can be active in your outreach, but you should also advertise your availability to work with others and dedicate time to fostering these conversations.

LINK

[Co-Creating Change](#)

Adapting your event style

Cinemas generally think about engaging audiences with a fairly limited range of events they produce: screenings and Q&As are ubiquitous. But what if your events served broader functions?

Educational film series

What about starting an impromptu school looking at different movements in film or moments in history as told through film, convened by a speaker or series of speakers? This approach is especially effective when thinking about hidden, marginalised or untold histories. Audiences with limited time are often more attracted to series with clear personal development benefit ('I've always wanted to learn more about the history of South American revolutionary movements.').

Community organising

Your community is undoubtedly facing shared issues that have no forum to bring together people with the desire to discuss and find solutions. What if your cinema and film screenings were the basis for these discussions? A cinema is a place to watch films, but it is also a type of forum that (ideally) many people feel comfortable in, giving it power as a space for activism, debate and civic participation. This work is likely to get people across the door who you wouldn't engage with otherwise.

Skills-based programmes

Beyond film watching, what other types of experiences could your venue host? Knitting groups, life drawing, self-defence, public speaking training? If you have appropriate space, this can be a powerful way to encourage people to see the venue as something for them.



Adapting operations

It's possible that your feedback in focus groups may have raised fundamental questions about how you approach things. It's easy to discard these points as insuperable to how you exist as a cinema ('The venue is too far', 'Your tickets are too expensive'), but there are ways to work around this if you feel they are crucial to developing your target audience.

One thing that should be addressed is the way that staff and established audience members can react as the audience changes. Your staff needs to be on board with this change, even if it means they have to adapt their sense of who 'your audience' is.

From experience, a regular complaint is that encouraging younger audience members into cinemas inspires complaints about behaviour from older audience members. The reality is that front of house staff and administrators may face disgruntled customers. You should already have established codes of conduct about behaviour developed with all audiences in mind, but if not, consider the complaints you may get so you have a plan for how to respond. You can listen without adapting; you can challenge audience members on their views; you can adapt in view of criticism; you can choose to privilege one audience over another; or you can find strategies to make sure the space is used by different groups at different times. Just be aware of how this will impact your staff, give them support to deal with these kinds of encounters or guidance on who to escalate it to. And remember: just because someone has a long-standing or valuable relationship with a venue doesn't give them the right to behave in a way you wouldn't otherwise accept. There may be other potential long-standing relationships you are foregoing by not balancing these points of view in line with your mission as a venue. Here are some other key operational changes you may need to make in the process of audience development:

Off-site events

if you're running a cinema, it feels hard to wean yourself off your site and make expensive, logistically intensive interventions into outside events. But they can raise the profile of your venue with your target audience group and achieve your goals in a way that other events can't. Factored into a broader programme of approaches, an off-site event or series can be powerful in changing your public perception.

Pricing

Ticket pricing is one of the most contentious issues in audience development. In the UK, we have ample evidence that even lowering the price to free (as in much of the museum and gallery sector) doesn't necessarily expand the audience to include otherwise excluded groups. [This Family Arts report](#) (from 2014 but still relevant) has useful insights on pricing psychology and value. There are few independent cinemas awash with cash, and there are further arguments against devaluing the experience by reducing pricing. Many have found success with 'Pay What You Can Afford' sliding-scale models, which are accompanied by a guide that outlines potential audience financial situations in reference to what they may pay, from £0-8. The guide removes the need for assumptions about your audience's finances, and although not a blanket fix for ensuring engagement from audiences with less financial wealth, addresses a basic issue of financial barriers. Read [this report](#) from Scottish Queer International Film Festival on their successful experiences.

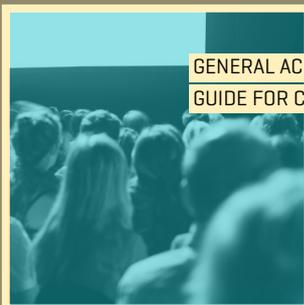
LINK[Family Arts report](#)**LINK**[SOIFF report](#)**Screening times**

This is a delicate balance, but beware of putting the cart before the horse with your screening times. Would it be better to have fewer screenings with slots that work with your audience's lives (e.g. commuting, eating, travelling) than conforming to a distributors' demands for shows early in the film's run? Are you splitting your audience unnecessarily?

Adapting your space for different audiences

This requires a lot of specificity outside of the scope of a general guide, but think carefully about whether your venue is accessible to your target audience. ICO has produced some overview guides to access (click the images to link to each guide) but you could also consider a specific consultancy.

LINKS TO OTHER GUIDES



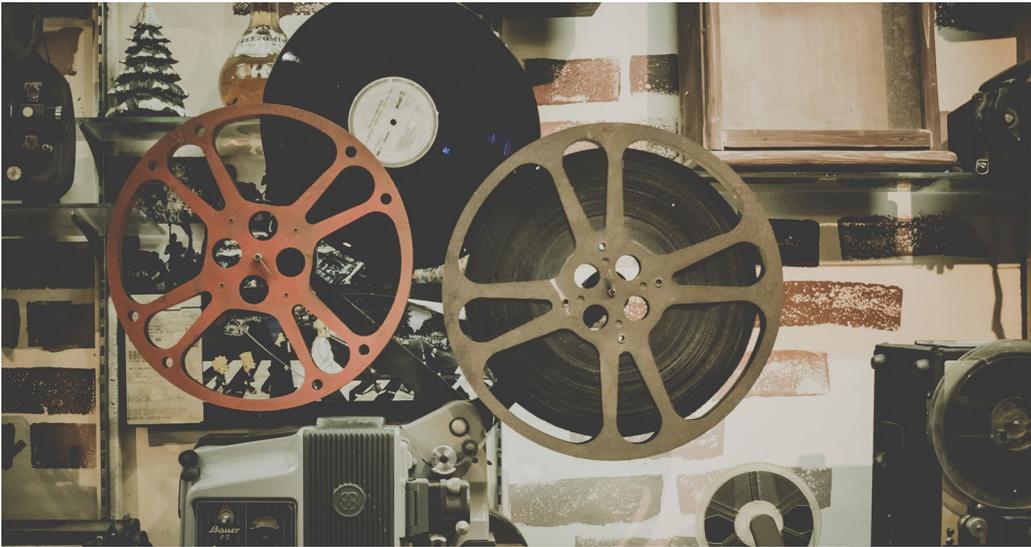
GENERAL ACCESS
GUIDE FOR CINEMAS



ACCESS FOR
D/DEAF AUDIENCES



ACCESS FOR
VISUALLY IMPAIRED
AUDIENCES



Adapting Marketing

Marketing for audience development should revolve around two key areas: specific, time-limited campaigns and working towards systems that promote discovery and retention. Campaigns can be costly and labour intensive. However, two metrics you should have in mind are the average retention of your customers and the average visits of your established audience. You should be able to interrogate your audience data to see how many visited for the first time in the last twelve months. Then look at how many of them made a subsequent visit. It's possible from this to arrive at a rough value of engaging new customers. From this you can advocate for the value of a campaign as a means of creating an ongoing relationship. Both campaigns and retention need to be in balance to derive value from either. Without campaigns, it's unlikely you'll see significant growth in your base of customers. Without retention, your campaigns will only ever have short-term impact.

Campaigns

The focus of an audience development marketing campaign should be on a specific targeted group. Hopefully the work you have done earlier in surveys and focus groups should give you a clear sense of the reason(s) your target group isn't visiting your venue. Your campaign should address those issues, either directly (e.g. 'Our weekday tickets are now just £5') or indirectly (e.g. by describing your ethos and countering perceptions).

The two issues any audience development campaign needs to surmount are that your audience is likely not engaging with your marketing channels (e.g. email newsletter, social media followers) and/or that your message isn't effective to that audience. Your job is to think forensically about who your target audience member is, where they are most likely to see your message and which platforms they use. See the section on '[Creating a marketing profile](#)' to help you drill down on where they can be reached. Then you need to think about what overall message you can use to address their barrier to entry, before refining it for the appropriate platforms.

Depending on the scale of your operation, here are some approaches likely to reach new audience members. Remember to consider access around all of these options: are they readable? What about your language and reference points? What about captioning, English as a second language readers, design for audiences with visual impairments? Remember: it's really important to use accredited translation services (e.g. BSL, non English language) when reaching out to communities. Not only is this skilled work that should be respected, but this is likely the first contact you will be having with that community and sensitivity is crucial. Considering these questions in marketing is a key part of audience development.

Flyering

Check the laws and rules around flyering in your region [here](#). If you are able to, flyering can be a really effective way of reaching out in targeted or high-traffic areas. Consider asking staff at different levels of the organisation to help with this as it a) gives you all a reason to speak with people in your community and understand their view of your venue and b) helps the community make connections with you and start discussions that wouldn't occur otherwise.

Postering

If you're running a time-limited campaign, postering has a uniquely broad reach. Almost every other form of marketing has an inbuilt barrier (e.g. smartphone user, television owner etc.) but anyone who is based in your community and is not blind or visually impaired can access them. Ask local businesses to display your signs: in addition to advertising, these conversations will engage a network of people who can be advocates for your work. Build in compensation for businesses in your budget to display your posters (complimentary tickets to your events sometimes works too!).

Paid social media

Social media can be extremely useful at finding small niches within your area. If there are organisations local to you with a following that maps to your desired audience, you can target their followers through paid reach (of course, it will be much more authentic and effective if they partner with you and share your work organically). You can also target users by postcode, gender and many lifestyle factors (e.g. new parents). Be careful about spend and tailoring your marketing message. While adding followers is useful, your focus should be on encouraging purchases and visits and incentivising people to join your owned marketing channels (e.g. email).

Letterbox drop

It is legal to post material through letterboxes, whether you hire a commercial company to do this or pay your staff to take it on. This can be especially effective if you are looking to expand your reach within certain postcodes and can combine it with an introductory offer.

LINK

[Flyering laws](#)

LINK

[Letterbox drops rules](#)

Marketing for retention and discovery

When you're planning your campaign, think clearly about audience retention. Some useful questions to ask yourself:

- Do you have mechanisms to encourage people to join your marketing channels? Is there a clear incentive to inviting your marketing into their lives (e.g. discounts, interesting information, dialogue etc.)?
- Is there a reason for people to visit you again? If you're promoting a series, could you flyer people about the next event as they leave? Or could you hand out a discount or free ticket?
- Are you gathering useful information about attendees that allow you to be targeted in your future approaches to them? (e.g. 'attended event in LA Rebellion film series' to remarket other Black cinema events)

Are you thinking clearly about how to move your audience up the 'chain of connections'? The last few years have shown us that social media followings can be rendered useless unless you're willing to pay to reach them. And you should also be aware that most social media companies have a corporate conscience that isn't a match to your core values. How can you convert social media users to email subscribers or postal contactees so you can create deeper, more direct connections?

Retention should go hand in hand with a review of your more 'passive' marketing. In the digital era, audience development is happening all the time as people discover your venue via the web. What image are you presenting to the audiences you want to develop? Hopefully in your focus group, people will have been honest about any issues with your website. Besides thinking about [user-centred design](#), there are many areas of accessibility you may be overlooking. [ICO's helpful guide to self-assessment](#) can give you a sense of the kinds of adjustments you need to make, but make sure the practical information you give about visiting your venue is thorough and clear. How about creating a venue walkthrough (including the route to the venue from major transport links)? [GFT's page](#) is a good example. Make sure you are clear that people can contact you to discuss their particular needs, as any description of your facilities won't cover everything, Attitude is Everything have a guide to producing a [full access guide here](#). Your accessibility guide should be easy to find on your website. Behind the scenes guides and videos explaining what people do at the venue can be useful pieces of outreach and will make your venue's accessibility clearer. It's also worth doing an audit of your search engine results, Google My Business profile and Trip Advisor responses to see how audiences have seen you (and what potential audiences are seeing!).

LINK

[ICO accessibility guide](#)

LINK

[GFT's page](#)

LINK

[User-Centred Design](#)

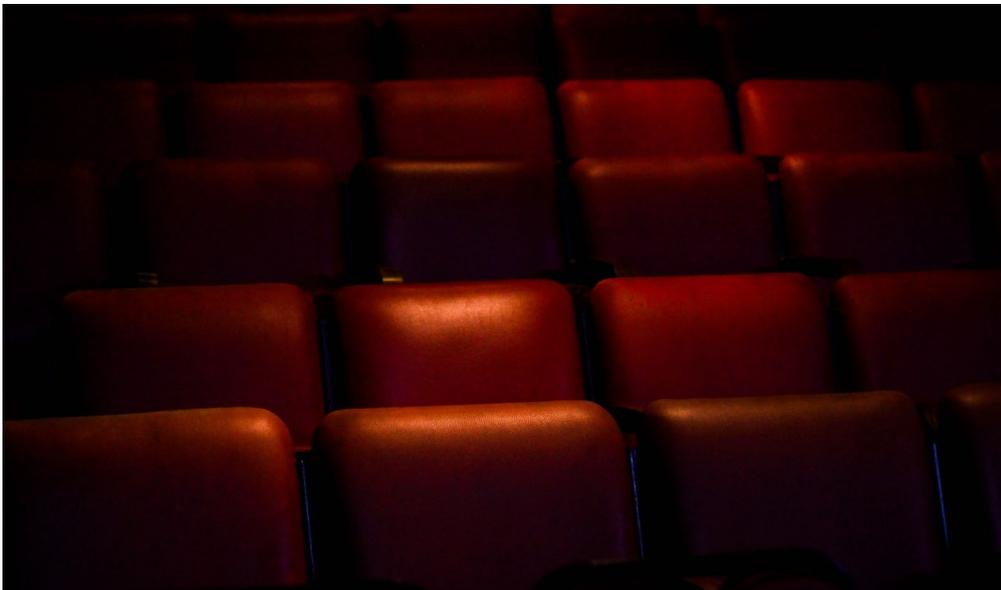
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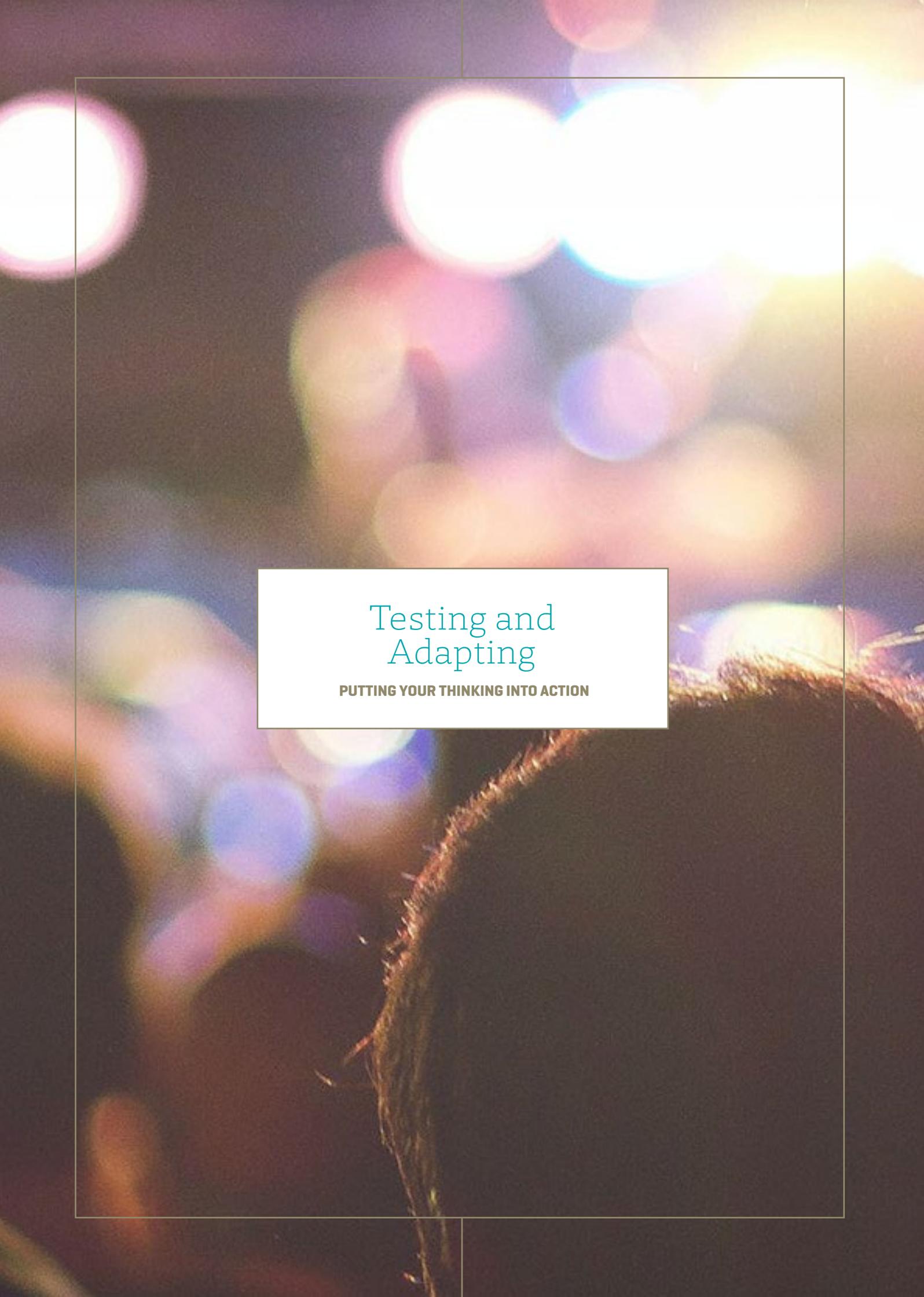
[Attitude is Everything full access guide](#)

One final overall point about audience development in marketing: be analytical about the way you promote films. Avoid making assumptions about what will encourage new people to join you. It's easy to narrow the ways you talk about film to the ways the film industry confers prestige and attention, such as awards, festival screenings, directors and actors, but not everyone thinks about films that way. What other reference points will audiences have to assure them this will be a worthwhile experience? Are there other ways you can encourage people to engage? Video content can be especially powerful, as well as imagery. Describing the emotional experience of a film, the places it will enable people to visit and the ideas it digs into are often far more important than putting the film in historical context. Personal recommendations from staff and visitors can also really cut through. Consider a blog post or a short piece to camera, where you talk about your experience of watching the film as if describing it to a friend or relative. This kind of marketing is relatable, personable, uses an authentic voice and doesn't feel like a 'hard sell'. There's usually a way to satisfy multiple approaches (e.g. trailer + short copy + long copy) and it pays dividends to follow user experience rather than a standardised approach. [This blog post](#) from Watershed in Bristol is a good example of the gains to be made when thinking about what audiences really want from your marketing.

LINK

['Using iterative development to redesign our exhibit pages' blog post](#)





Testing and Adapting

PUTTING YOUR THINKING INTO ACTION

Audience Development in Action

Watershed in Bristol is a good example of the gains to be made when thinking about what audiences really want when they interact with your marketing.

Having established how you're going to approach growing your audience, you are now almost ready to put your test into practice. There's just a last couple of questions you'll need to ask yourself:

Running a Test

Do you have all the parameters you need to run your test?

Working with incomplete data makes any test harder to scrutinise. Have a final meeting to check:

- You've got all the historical data you need to set a baseline
- That everyone understands the criteria you'll be judging the test against (e.g. increased spend per head, increased attendance)
- That all systems are in place to monitor your progress (e.g. Is your Google Analytics account set up? Have you told front of house staff about handing out evaluation forms and why it's important? Etc.).

Easy to overlook in advance, hard to fix retrospectively... these are essential steps to take!

When is the best time to run the test?

Given that no test can be undertaken without additional work on your team and – if all goes well – will increase the amount of audience-facing work your team will be doing, be mindful of the optimal moment to execute the test. You might want to avoid crunch periods such as festivals or the awards corridor where there are greater financial risks to experimenting and when your team may be stretched or unable to focus on path-finding or adaptation. But on the other hand, avoid running your experiment in 'down times' (e.g. during weekday daytimes, or for many independent cinemas, the quieter summer months) unless you know that your audience is available during these periods (e.g. parent and baby screenings). This is likely to doom or compromise your results from the start, as much as it might seem like an intelligent piece of risk mitigation to use 'free space'.

When will you assess the test?

Take a look at how your campaign is going to run and the dates of key 'activations' (such as screenings or marketing drives etc.). Find a date part way along the timeline, far enough along that your activations will have had time to take effect but not so long that you can't course correct if they are having minimal impact. The team should be ready to report on results at this meeting and make suggestions about adaptations or learnings to disseminate if successful.



Analysing results and adapting

You'll now be in a position to check your results. Whether it's been wildly successful or needs adjustment, it's important to look closely at what the data is telling you. If it's been a success, it's useful to share this with the wider organisation as there are doubtless ways you can replicate this success in other areas (plus it's healthy for everyone in an organisation to know how their work contributed to good outcomes!). If things need adjustment, you should think about the next timeline for making the change.

It's really important not to view 'failure' as a basis for retreating from your strategic goals. Speak candidly about why a project hasn't worked in your team and if you can, survey the audience members either formally or anecdotally. Adopting a [growth mindset](#) around audience development is key: failure or success at a slow rate can be useful steps in gaining a better understanding of what works and what's needed to develop audiences. Never step away from your principles or strategies in the face of initial failures. Support staff doing this work and make sure they know that 'failure' in this area is an invitation to change, learn and improve, not a referendum on their talents. Not everything happens at once and all successful audience development projects have faced challenge and failure.

LINK

[Growth Mindset](#)

Conclusion

While we've focused throughout on an approach to short-term projects and goals, this guide is really a model for your continuous audience development work – year in, year out. In audience development, as with Lewis Carroll's Red Queen, it can take all your energy to stay in the same place; to maintain a core audience who can keep your venue alive. But done right, it can become a practice that stands at the centre of your organisation's financial and moral growth. It also safeguards your venue's future: the more diverse your audience is, the broader the demographics you call on, the more interaction and participation you have, the more resilient your organisation will be to meta-level changes in your community and the country at large. To reap the most meaningful benefits, your audience development should go far beyond specific projects, transforming how you think about every aspect of your work as a cinema.



Useful Resources

BUILDING AN AUDIENCE

Useful resources

Case Studies

The Audience Agency: The Audience Agency is a charity funded by the Arts Council that aims to give a national picture of arts audiences and provide insights to help more people engage with art. They have a lot of [good resources](#) around audience work and have their own free tool for audience segmentation and tracking, Audience Finder. Audience Finder takes data from all Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations (and other arts organisations who participate) and segments arts goers by type and regional spread. You can also commission an Area Profile Report that simplifies the process of understanding who is in your catchment area (£125 for the lowest level of detail and £350 for the highest).

The Bigger Picture: BFI's Film Audience Network's site has a lot of case studies on audience development.

BFI Statistics: Weekend box office information and a wealth of reports on UK cinema-going, including the [Statistical Yearbook](#), which covers the previous year's data on cinema attendance by age, socio-economic status, gender, racial diversity, disability and more.

Andy Rae: Andy Rae's box office projects are worth looking at for data-driven methods to audience development and segmentation. He's also hireable as a consultant.

Movio: A piece of CRM (customer relationship manager) software for cinemas, [Movio also has a blog with case studies](#) on cinemagoing.

Industry Intelligence

NOMIS: The Office of National Statistics has this useful tool that segments UK census data to your local area. Select 'Local Area Report' and start working on comparing details to your audience.

Expanded Thinking

Indigo Ltd: Indigo are a consultancy that combine audience insights with other important pieces of support like marketing and fundraising to show you the best way to make use of those insights.

Beyond the Multiplex: An academic research project into the audience for independent cinemas.

BIFA's research report into under 30 audiences

Into Film: Partnering with the Film Industry

Comscore: reports on moviegoing from the powerful box office agency.

Attitude is Everything: Fantastic organisation making entertainment more accessible for Deaf and disabled audiences with great guides and best practice.

Shape Arts: More useful guides for different areas of access from this great consultancy and arts platform.