National Programmes

# Social Impact Toolkit

## 1 Introduction and guide to measuring social impact



National Museums Scotland

MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

Esmée Fairbairn Collections Fund

# Content

## Social Impact Toolkit

### Introduction and guide to measuring social impact

# Social Impact Toolkit

## Background to Toolkit

This toolkit was originally developed in conjunction with a National Museums Scotland National Programme in 2018, working with partner museums across Scotland to help measure and articulate the social impact of our work with autistic children, young people and their families. The toolkit has undergone further development through use, measuring the impact of National Museums Scotland's Community Engagement work and other National Partnerships projects. We want to share the resources and knowledge that we gained through this pilot.

## Why measure social impact?

In a time of limited budgets and financing, it is more important than ever that museums evidence the value of the work they do. Museums are much more than visitor destinations and can have real social and educational benefits for communities. There is amazing work being done across Scotland; we hope this toolkit will support professionals to capture evidence of the impact of their work.

By establishing which programmes have the most impact or identifying ways to achieve the greatest impact in their ongoing programmes, museums can best utilise the limited resources available.

Additionally, access to further resources is often dependent on obtaining funding from external sources. Having a bank of evidence about the impact of a museum's work strengthens their case for funding.

## How to measure social impact

In order to evaluate impact, you first need to define what you are measuring. We developed a suggested methodology and framework to help you assess and articulate the specific impact outcomes of your museum's programmes.

**Framework**

This framework was created based on feedback we received from professionals across Scotland at our **Social Impact Symposium** in November 2018, the **Museum Associations Measuring Social Impact Toolkit** and the Scottish Government's **National Performance Framework**.



The framework is built on **three core outcome areas: enriching learning experiences, cultural citizenship** and **improvements in the health and wellbeing** of your audiences as a result of experiences at your museum.

These three areas have been common features of outcome measurements in the museum sector for decades. These outcomes do not work in isolation and their effects overlap, all three contribute to positive social impact for participants. It does not mean that your impact will be limited to these areas, but it provides a structural framework to work within.
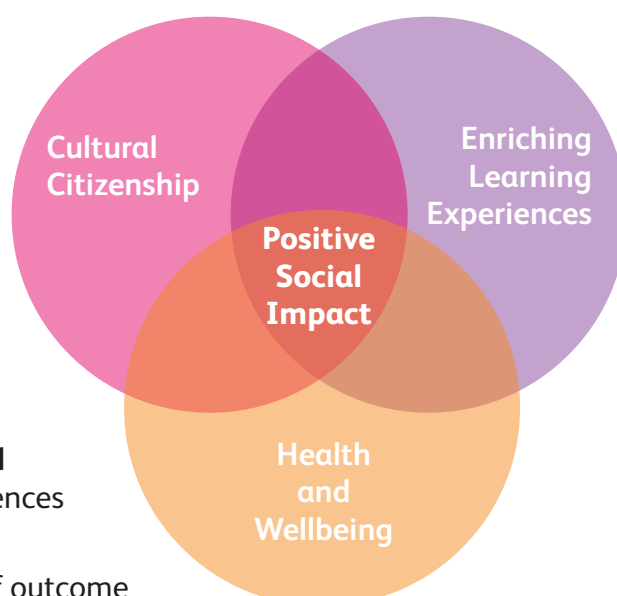
For each of these areas, we have identified core outcomes that are common to many museum programmes. This toolkit is designed to help you build an evidence bank based on these core outcomes. Every programme is different; there may be alternative or additional outcomes you wish to capture. The toolkit is editable to enable you to capture other outcomes and adapt it to your needs.

## Core outcomes

| Core area | Outcome |
|---|---|
| **Cultural Citizenship** | Through taking part in experiences at a museum, participants will make repeated visits, they will feel that it is a valuable space and a space where they feel welcome and confident to visit. |
| **Enriching Learning Experiences** | Through taking part in experiences at a museum, participants will gain knowledge, skills and/or enthusiasm for learning, motivating further engagement in learning and self-development. |
| **Mental health and wellbeing** | Through taking part in experiences at a museum, involvement has a positive impact on the participants' health and wellbeing. |

This final outcome is very broad. There are multiple ways that museum experiences can contribute to the wellbeing of participants. The programmes which were part of the pilot for this toolkit supported wellbeing primarily through enjoyment, social interaction, and learning. It would be advisable to breakdown the ways in which your programme can support mental health and wellbeing. The New Economic Foundation **'Five Ways to Wellbeing'** is an evidence-based approach to supporting wellbeing and is an excellent resource to start with when identifying the impact on wellbeing that a programme may have.

## Identifying outcomes and impact

To capture evidence of the impact of your programme, you need to first consider the outcomes you are hoping to have. The best way to establish this is to map your project. There is an example of this process below.

| Who is taking part | What it happening | How will they feel | What will they gain | What are the potential outcomes? |
|---|---|---|---|---|

It is important that evaluation captures the outcome of a project not just the output i.e. what impact the project has not just what happened during the project. You can use the three core outcomes as a starting point for considering what impact your programme may have.

Here is an example of an NMS community engagement project called Friday Friends.

# Identifying outcomes and impact example table

**Friday Friends Project**

| Who is taking part? | What is happening? |
|---|---|
| *Example*: Visually impaired children and their families | *Example:* Monthly 2-hour museum sessions with object handling and art |

| How will they feel? | What will they gain? |
|---|---|
| *Example:* Welcomed Inspired Confident Happy | *Example:* Peer support and friendship Increased confidence in visiting the museum Support for learning for the school curriculum using multisensory workshops |

**What are the potential outcomes?**

*Example:*

Increased engagement with culture and history including museums

Improved mental wellbeing for children and families

Improved knowledge and engagement with topics from the school curriculum

# Impact measuring tools

By establishing the intended aims of your programme, you can then establish what you are trying to measure and report on. The intended aims are not fixed; by doing evaluation you may find you are having an impact that you had not previously considered. Your aims can be reviewed and altered throughout your programme.

There are two types of evaluation tools in this toolkit (observation and questionnaires) as well as information on further methods you may wish to consider. We recognise that organisations have different levels of resources available to them for evaluation and that you may not have the time/resources to develop your own tools. With that in mind, we have provided ready-made evaluation tools that you can print off and use immediately. However, we also recognise that no two projects are the same and that you may wish to alter the tools to capture alternative outcomes or use them to incorporate evaluation that extends beyond social impact. To accommodate these needs, the tools we provide are editable, enabling you to adapt them to suit the needs of your project, organisation and participants.



We do not evaluate our programmes for social impact in isolation; the example tools contain questions that capture additional general feedback from participants, including desired improvements. Repeated use of the tools should enable you build up a bank of evidence for the social impact your programme is having.

# Toolkit overview

## Observation Sheet

Observation proved to be the most useful tool for partner museums during the pilot. Observation sheets can be used during a session to record and capture evidence of the impact you are having in the moment, as it happens. For example: Are people laughing and smiling or do they look bored? Is there social interaction? Do they ask questions?

Observation can also provide an opportunity to capture spontaneous, unprompted quotes from participants. Often participants will make comments during general conversation about the effect of a programme that they would not write down on a feedback sheet. For example, a participant might say, "It is lovely to get out to meet people, it is the highlight of my week not to be home alone." This quote would be an example of evidence for the impact of a programme/ session on the wellbeing of a participant through the reduction of her/his isolation.

We have provided two example observation sheets: one with suggested coding categories for online sessions and one for in-person sessions. You may choose to edit the boxes to include a different set of behaviours or evidence that best represents the outcomes you wish to capture.

The ideal way to utilise this tool is to have a member of staff or volunteer who can solely fill the role of observer. This allows for the most information to be captured. However, we acknowledge that many museums will not have the resources for this. The sheet can still be used for retrospective review at the end of the session by those delivering the programme. Once you get into the practice of completing the sheet, you will become more aware of the evidence that supports the outcomes that you are looking for in your sessions. You will note changes that occur over time if you keep a record for comparison.

If more than one member of staff or volunteer is delivering the programme, it is a good practice to get everyone's perspectives in order to gain as full a picture as possible. This can involve different people taking on the role of observer and a debrief after each session.

## Questionnaire

Questionnaires can be used to gather written (or typed) feedback from participants in your programme or visitors to your museum. Questionnaires are often used at the end of a session or after a session, asking participants to self-reflect on their experience. Alternatively, you may wish to use a pair of questionnaires at the beginning and end of your session to compare how participants' responses have changed, if their questions have been answered, or if their expectations have been met.

Questionnaires can include a variety of different question types. Closed-ended questions allow for quick responses, whereas open-ended questions allow visitors to feedback in their own words. We have found that open-ended questions often provide great insights into the impact of our programmes, and not always the ones that we were expecting. Another question type that can be included in questionnaires is a word cloud, where respondents can circle the way the session made them feel. This can be a useful way to capture the impact of a session on participants' wellbeing.

We have provided four example versions of questionnaires that you might use at the end of a session: one for adults, a simpler version for children, one for first-time visitors, and one that is designed for a longer-term project. The example questionnaires include questions that touch on all three of the main outcome areas (cultural citizenship, enriching learning experiences, and health and wellbeing).

The questionnaires are editable to allow you to adapt them to reflect the specific intended outcomes of your individual projects and the impact you wish to measure. We have provided a question bank which is categorised into the three outcome areas; you may wish to choose different questions from the bank that better suit your needs, or use the question bank as inspiration for writing your own questions.

How effective a questionnaire is at capturing impact is dependent on the participants you are working with and the programme you are running. Here are a few key points to consider:

**Literacy levels**
Is the language simple enough?
Could people draw their answers if they wished to do so instead of writing?

**Time available** to complete the questionnaire

**Impact of asking people to complete surveys**
What is the least intrusive way you can capture this data?

**How to capture the most people**.
People are more likely to fill in a survey on the day, if it is short, compared to sending a survey after the session. The more steps you put in for people to complete and return the survey the less responses you will collect.

**Explain how the information will be used**, for example improving the programme to offer them a better experience.

**Assess the situation**, it is not always appropriate to ask for feedback.
If a parent has a tired distressed child, accept they have more important priorities.

**Remember all participants**, and that your methods meet all their needs. It is important to capture pupils' feedback as well as teachers, or children's feedback as well as parents and guardians.

Evaluation is always a balancing act between capturing the best data and having the least impact on participants and the programme. Be sure you know why you are evaluating something and what you are going to do with that information.

## Other Evaluation Tools

| Verbal Feedback | Focus Groups |
|---|---|
| If you have built rapport with your participants, you may wish to ask for their feedback verbally. Many of the open-ended questions from the question bank can be used verbally at the end of a session, as long as your participants feel comfortable sharing their feedback with you directly. Have a plan for how you will record these verbal responses, including any key quotes from participants. | For long term projects you may wish to carry out more in-depth analysis than a questionnaire will allow. Focus groups are generally formed by recruiting participants who represent a variety of perspectives, or a specific demographic you wish to ask for feedback. The focus group participants are then asked to participate in a guided discussion. |

## Case Study

Focusing in on the experiences of a single participant can be an excellent way to demonstrate the impact of a longer term project. Interviewing a participant and recording how the programme has affected them can allow for detailed analysis of the social impact that has been achieved.

## Interactive methods

This is important to consider if you are working with a younger audience who may not wish to engage with a questionnaire. There are multiple ways you can make the feedback process more engaging, including selecting emojis on a wall in response to a question, or sticking post it notes with feedback to a picture.

## Social Media

Participants may choose to provide feedback on your organisation's social media account. This can be a very useful way to gather evidence of impact. For example, one of our partners captured the impact on families with autistic children through comments on social media that identified their enjoyment, and talked about how the participants valued having a session that met their needs as they struggled to take part in cultural activities otherwise.

## Photography

Photography can be an excellent way to capture what you are observing in the sessions and will be more powerful in a report than any description you can provide. However, participants should be informed and asked for permission before photography takes place. Participants should also be informed how/where the photos will be used.