

Prepared for:

MUSEUMS
ASSOCIATION

Museums Association
Transformer Evaluation
2015-16

Summary Report

Prepared by:

Background, Objectives and Evaluation Approach

Background: Transformers Programme

The Museum Association (MA) received funding from Arts Council England, Museums Galleries Scotland and CyMAL to run a one year pilot professional development programme. This was designed to stimulate and support enterprising people working for museums, and to explore new ways of working, responding to the challenging social, political and economic landscapes of which they are part.

Applications for the first programme closed in May 2014, and the first cohort of 19 participants were selected.

Due to the success of the first programme, a second was commissioned, and applications for the 2015 programme closed in May 2015 with a total of 27 participants. This version of the programme was funded by the Museums Association, Arts Council England, Museums and Galleries Scotland & The Federation of Museums and Galleries Wales. As with the previous year, participants were selected as recognising a commitment to exploring and challenging themselves as well as transforming their approach to their practice.

The selected participants represented the diversity of the sector, with a mix of independent, local authority and national museums from England, Scotland and Wales.

This cohort engaged with these interlinked developmental strands:

- A core residential development programme of inspirational sessions which model new approaches and ways of doing things;
- Support from a project coach;
- Participants were invited to pitch for micro-funding to invest in a change which makes a positive difference for themselves, others and their organisation;
- Involving and accounting to others within their organisation or local community who might otherwise have limited voice and influence yet are important to the success of their work (e.g. frontline staff) – as well as accounting to their peers on the programme.

Additional context

Two papers, both of which provide context for the broader aims of the study, were used in the design of relevant metrics for the evaluation template:

1. Working Wonders: an action plan for the museum Workforce

Key recommendations for the museum workforce from this paper are:

- Strengthen leadership and management.
- Develop business, enterprise and entrepreneurial skills.
- Open up entry to the sector and diversify the workforce.
- Commit to Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff.
- Develop sector specific skills.

2. Museums Change Lives

This policy paper establishes the following principles and aims for museums:

- Every museum is different, but all can find ways of maximising their social impact.
- Everyone has the right to meaningful participation in the life and work of museums.
- Audiences are creators as well as consumers of knowledge: their insights and expertise enrich and transform the museum experience for others.
- Active public participation changes museums for the better.
- Museums foster questioning, debate and critical thinking.
- Good museums offer excellent experiences that meet public needs.
- Effective museums engage with contemporary issues.
- Social justice is at the heart of the impact of museums.
- Museums are not neutral spaces.
- Museums are rooted in places and contribute to local distinctiveness.

Transformers Programme outline

Participants were required to commit to and attend the entire programme, including preparation and follow-up work between formal sessions.

The commitment of museums to support participants was considered crucial; releasing candidates for the core development programme, coaching sessions, and developmental activities.

Participants needed the support of their organisation to engage colleagues and to embed fresh ideas and practices arising from the programme.

Two of the programme sessions were residential (2 days, 1 night), held in July and September 2015 respectively, with a final day-long event in March 2016. In this iteration of the programme, responding to findings in the pilot evaluation, extra strands of the programme were built in. These included regional Inspiration Days, where the Transformers could invite colleagues to engage them with their projects and two alumni days, to bring together the past and current cohorts.

In early October the participants were able to apply for micro-funding to deliver their idea.

The delivery period of the programme ran from October 2015 to March 2016, although some participant projects extended beyond this period.

Transformers Programme outline

Residential event content:

The first residential events were held on the 14th and 15th July and the 16th and 17th July at Missenden Abbey, Great Missenden. All participants attended and feedback was very positive. The programme was themed around 'Knowing Self' and the participants were provided with a personal development toolkit, a methodology for learning more about their personal strengths (Cliftons Strengthsfinder) and project planning tools. John V Willshire, founder, Smithery ran an idea generating workshop inspired by the field of design thinking and venture capitalism. This proved to be really energising and popular with the cohort.

The residential was characterised by an informal action learning inspired structure. Participants were grouped according to their idea for change and each group had a mix of seniority and type of museum within it. This model was a great success and a supportive set of peers was formed.

The second residential was held on 7th & 8th September and 9th & 10th September at Stoke Rochford Hall. The focus was *Impacting Others* and the participants engaged with a wide selection of models for working effectively with others and tools for change.

Guest speakers included Sharon Heal, director, Museums Association, Gaby Porter, independent consultant and MA Board member; Steve Miller, Head of Norfolk Museums and Arts Service; Richard Sandell, Professor of Museum Studies, University of Leicester; Daniel Glaser, director, Science Gallery London.

Liz Johnson, Museums Relationship Manager, Arts Council England and Rachel Silversen, President, Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales attended and played the role of panel for participant project pitches. This was of great value to the participants and an excellent way of honing their pitching skills and giving them confidence in their individual projects.

Transformers Programme outline

The projects developed by the participants were:

Rachel Ball, Volunteer Manager, Royal Air Force Museum, London – developing with colleagues, departmental ‘mini-guides’ to share knowledge of roles across the organisation and create cohesion.

Denise Bowler, Secondary and Post-16 Co-ordinator, The Whitworth – *Are Galleries Just For Girls?* A research project into gender imbalance and gallery access

Kathy Cremin, Director of Co-operation, Bede’s World – A practice guide for the sector drawn from Bede’s World community knowledge. (NB unfortunately Kathy was unable to complete the programme due to the closure of Bede’s World.)

Becky Cund, Director of HR and Administration, Shakespeare Birthplace Trust – *Equal Access for People with SEND and Dementia*, transforming the visitor offer at Shakespeare’s Birthplace Trust

Megan Dennis, Curator, Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse – *Collaborate with Gressenhall*. A new way of working with a wide range of communities on an annual theme.

Jody East, Creative Programme Curator, Royal Pavillion and Museum, Brighton – *Introducing new voices* – new ways of working with young people through social media

Shona Elliot, Lead Curator, Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum – Increasing access to the collections store

Nicola Euston, Museum Manager, The Atkinson – creating and launching an income generating exhibition space at the Atkinson.

David Gelsthorpe, Curator of Earth Sciences, The Manchester Museum – transforming Manchester Museum into a campaigning museum.

Rebecca Holt, Chief Operating Officer, Battersea Arts Centre – Merging Battersea Arts Centre and Wandsworth Museum into *BAC Moving Museum*

Transformers Programme outline

Clare Hunt, Curatorial Manager, Southend Museum

Developing skills and opportunities for Southend

Museums Service curatorial staff and volunteers.

Halima Khanom, National and International Learning & Engagement Coordinator, Imperial War Museum – An international learning toolkit.

Laura Lewis, Project Co-ordinator, Wardown Park Museum – *Activating Museum Makers* – creating an active transformation framework for volunteers.

Kylea Little, Keeper of History, Discovery Museum – *Foodbanks in Newcastle* – a collaboration with the West End Foodbank to raise awareness and develop empathy from visitors.

Adrian Mason, Head of Marketing and Operations, Tullie House Museum – *Marketing the Border Reivers* – bringing the region together through shared brand and retail products.

Liz McCaffry Payne, Corporate and Trusts Fundraiser, Bletchley Park Trust – developing a business case for community engagement.

Philip Miles, Museum Manager, Sheringham Museum – *Raspberry Pi: DIY*. Developing low cost solutions for independent museums from evolving technologies.

Becki Morris, Collections Assistant, Heritage and Culture Warwickshire Developing the DCN – disability co-operative network.

Transformers Programme outline

The projects developed by the participants were:

Diana Morton, Outreach and Access Manager, City Art Centre, Edinburgh
Proud City: Celebrating LGBTQIA+ people in Edinburgh.

Mhairi Muncaster, Development Manager, William Morris Gallery – *Taking the William Morris brand into new spaces* – a business plan.

Alex Nicholson-Evans, Volunteer Development Manager, Birmingham Museums Trust – *Why don't people volunteer in museums?* – a research project.

Victoria Rogers, Museum Manager, Cardiff Story Museum *Guerrilla Museum, First Draft*: A design competition to reimagine the Cardiff Story Museum.

Pollie Shorthouse, Executive Director of NCCL, Galleries of Justice, The Egalitarian Trust *Legal Literacy for Adults*: Creating a space to empower people with knowledge of the law and how they can make changes to their lives

Caroline Storr, Heritage Development Manager, Salford Community Leisure – *Proud to be a Fundraiser*: using the collection as assets to attract investment.

Katie Taylor, Individual Giving Executive, Royals Museums Greenwich *Why do Donors Give?* Co-production & Radical Philanthropy with Patrons

Caroline Worthington, Chief Executive, Bexley Heritage Trust *A new plan*: Exploring income generation options and endowments

Evaluation objectives

The core objectives of the evaluation process were to:

- Capture change at both individual and organisational levels.
- Capture the extent to which the programme achieved its aims of developing values related to the policy paper Museums Change Lives.
- Capture any values based improvement to the participants' working practice and the way their institution operates.
- Enable the Museums Association to demonstrate the way in which the programme has contributed to participating institutions increasing their resilience and innovation through the delivery of the participants' projects
- Compare the evaluation results from 2014-15 to those from the same programme run in 2015-16.

Atticus Research are an independent market research consultancy, specialising in all aspects of qualitative market research and consultation, including evaluation of a huge range of events, projects and initiatives in many sectors, including the heritage sector.

Atticus was commissioned by the MA to design an evaluation framework and analyse the results.

This document represents a report on the findings from the evaluation process, following a full analysis of participant feedback.

Transformers evaluation: the research approach

In order to capitalise on the fact that the project co-ordinator was present at the sessions and in contact with the participants throughout the programme, participants were provided with a self-completion evaluation exercise comprising both metrics (drawn from the values / aims outlined in the policy papers) and projective exercises to capture the more emotional associations with the experience.

Project Champions Evaluation

A similar questionnaire was developed for members of the different organisations supporting participants in the Transformers Programme, to help establish the impact of the programme at an organisational level.

Management summary

Management summary

Comments from participants in both 2014-15 and 2015-16 were consistent and extremely positive:

▶ The findings from the evaluation clearly demonstrate that both participants and project champions perceive the Transformers Programme to have delivered a range of benefits and lasting outcomes, both for the individual participants themselves, and their organisations.

▶ The residential sessions were highly praised for the positive atmosphere and the ability to share knowledge and ideas with a supportive, innovative and likeminded group of peers.

▶ Reactions suggest that the programme exceeded expectations and provided participants with a number of valuable benefits, including:

- Excellent mentoring / coaching
- Exposure to new thinking and ideas
- Cross-fertilisation of ideas and influences from other institutions
- Realising personal and professional strengths
- Support from peers
- A CPD framework
- Making valuable connections outside their institution
- Building confidence / a stronger sense of self


▶ Reactions also emphasised the sense of progression and achievement that many participants felt as a result of the Transformers Programme, and their positive feelings about taking their learning forward.

▶ The programme outcomes transcended personal and skills development for the participants, to include benefits for the museums and their work.


▶ Few were able to suggest improvements, and those mentioned focussed on the limited timeframe for the projects and the desire to have longer to develop and implement them, emphasising that the programme itself, and its outcomes, have been well received.

Management summary


A number of recommendations emerged from the evaluation process, as follows:




Some felt one of the biggest challenges was in getting others in their organisation on board, or 'selling' their project internally. Comments suggest that more support and advice on how to do this would be of value to participants in future years.





It could also be of benefit to involve the participating museums in the Transformers Programme earlier in the process, and this would benefit both the organisations themselves, and help participants to get staff at all levels, including management, on board with their project and with implementing change.



Some also felt that the ability to network in between the events would be beneficial. The networking element of the programme is of huge value to participants and many wanted more of this during and after the programme. Some suggested an online network would be an advantage. Although the Linked-in network in 2014-15 was not well used, it could be that an alternative platform could deliver this additional need in future years.



While many elements of the programme events were highly praised, the strengths finder sessions were notably less popular and many felt this time could be put to better use in future years.





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Following

Lets promise not to forget the #MAtransformers feeling! We can drive change & make a difference #museumschangelives



RETWEETS
9

LIKES
15

