

Audience development for theatres today

Resilient Theatres: Resilient Communities



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Host and chair

Siân Eagar

Theatres at Risk Adviser and Resilient Theatres:
Resilient Communities Programme Manager, Theatres
Trust

Audience development for theatres today

Catherine Bradley

Senior Consultant, The Audience Agency

Part 1: Understanding your audiences

Catherine Bradley
Senior Consultant, The Audience Agency



Audience development rooted in your purpose

Understand and articulate your purpose to clarify your audience goals.

Who are you? Who are you for?

This supports:

- Sense of purpose underpins strategic planning
- A long-term view; avoiding one-off, short term approaches
- Shared understanding and a common vision for what you want to achieve
- Empowered decision making – the opportunity to question and say no!



Where are you starting from?

What do you know about your current audiences?

Who engages with you? How often? What do they do?
Where do they come from?

What are your benchmarks for in person, digital and participatory audiences?

Data sources may include surveys, ticketing system, participation records, digital analytics, postcodes



Segmentation

Using insight to group people by distinct needs that you can respond to

Check list...

- ✓ Evidence – do you know enough about them?
- ✓ Big enough – are there enough of these people to make your activities worthwhile?
- ✓ Reachable - can you find and communicate with them?
- ✓ Homogeneous – do they share enough of the same characteristics to be targeted with the same message

Audience Spectrum: population segmentation based on cultural interests

[Audience Spectrum Pen Portraits | The Audience Agency](#)



[Case in Point | Theatr Brycheiniog | The Audience Agency](#)

Where are you starting from?

What do you know about your...

...current programme offer?

- What do you do for different types of audience?
- What's working and for whom? What's not working so well?

...current marketing activities and effectiveness?

- What channels? What messages? What's the reach? What's the ROI?



Part 2: Understanding the environment in which you operate and audience development potential

Catherine Bradley
Senior Consultant, The
Audience Agency



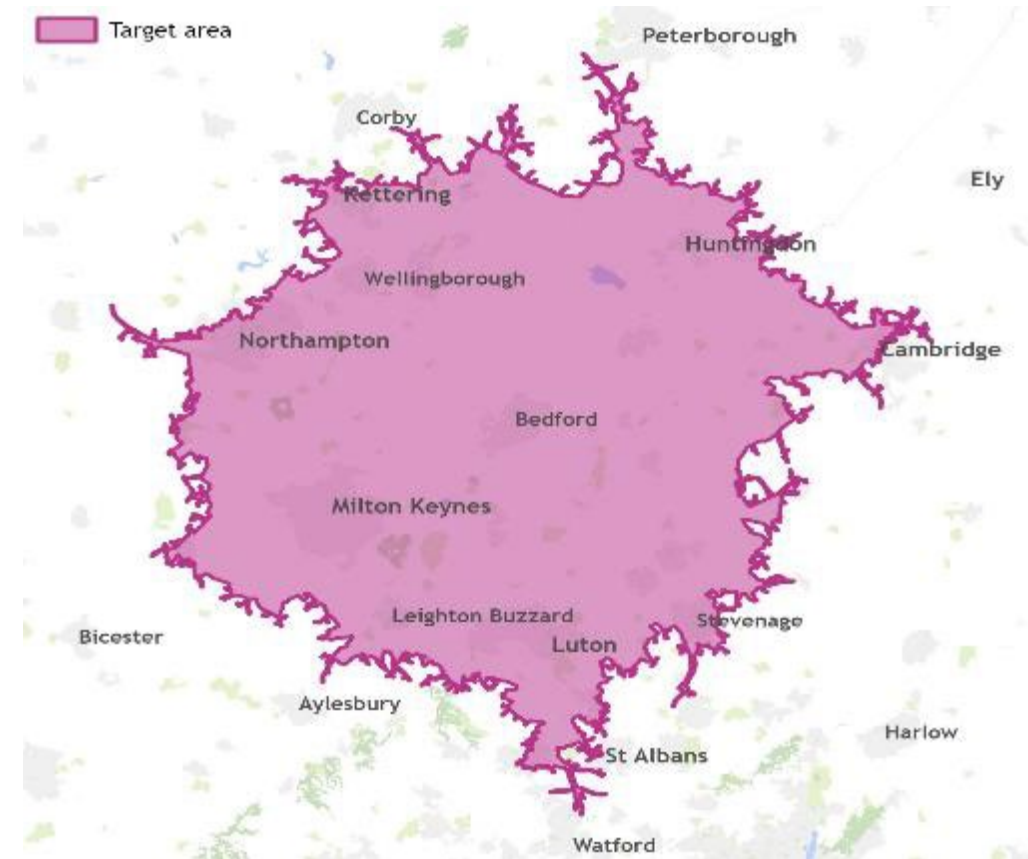
Who lives in your local area?

Population Profile Reports

- New reports using 2021 Census data, alongside Audience Spectrum and cultural engagement data
- Available down to ward level
- Population change reports also available

[Audience Answers | Population Profile Reports | The Audience Agency](#)

- Also consider tourism and local authority sources



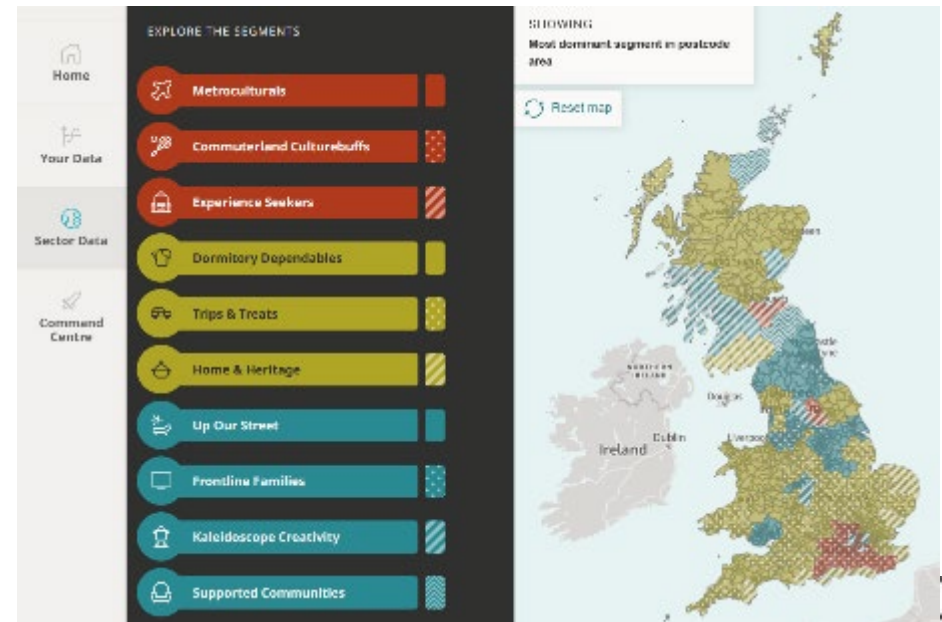
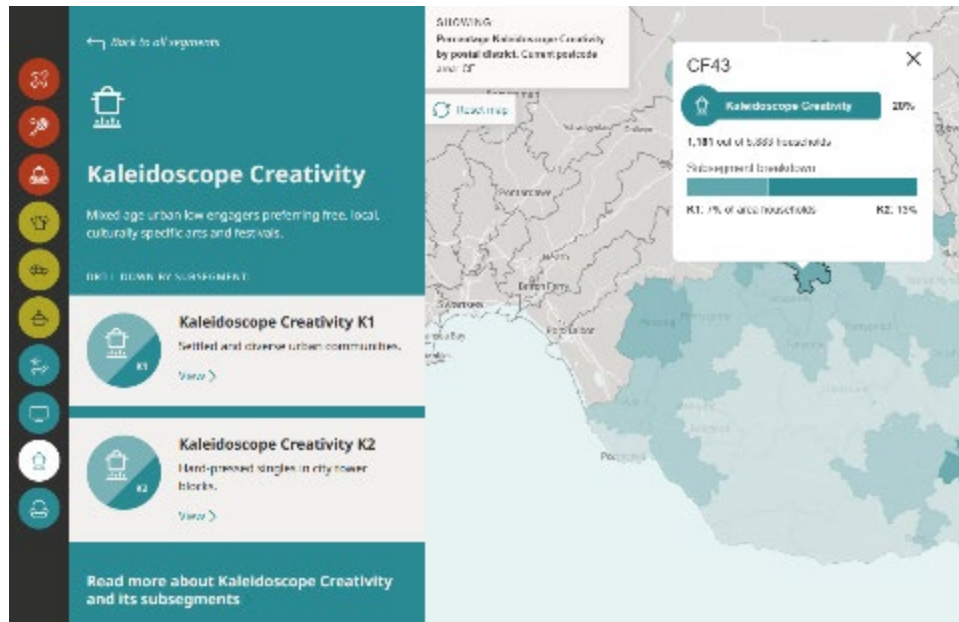
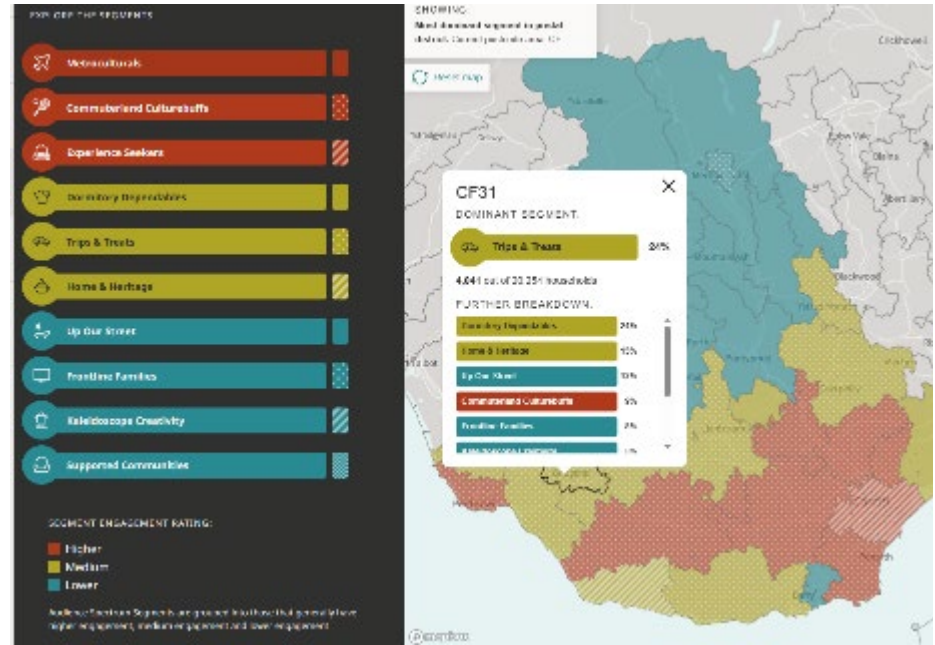
10% Theatres Resilience discount:
Quote #PPRspecialoffer

 the audience agency

Audience Spectrum in the population

Audience Spectrum mapping: Access via [Audience Answers](#)

FREE to use!



The bigger picture

How is cultural engagement changing?
How will this affect what you do?
Work in an agile way to understand
changing opportunities

Cultural Participation Monitor

Overall, people attending culture less than pre-pandemic and 42% are still feeling 'worse off' BUT:

- Gen-Zs (16-24) returning to near pre-pandemic levels.
- Twice as many people aged under 44 (51%) attended any arts and heritage event in the previous 12 months than those between the ages of 45-65 (25%).

Social attitudes and climate concerns matter to audiences (esp. younger ones and better off families):

- 51% would generally prefer to go to cultural venues that share their values, while almost half are more actively willing to engage with organisations that take a visible stance on Social Issues – esp. Climate Change.

The bigger picture

How is cultural engagement changing?
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Work in an agile way to understand
changing opportunities

Sector and regional benchmarking via Audience Answers and Cultural Participation Monitor e.g.:

- 19% attended a play, 22% a musical, 15% a family arts event and 8% dance in the previous 12 months (all ages).
- 12% rate their interest in 'popular or mainstream' culture as 8-10/10 – especially likely to be musicals and plays.
- 9% rated interest in 'classical or traditional' culture as 8-10/10 and 7% 'contemporary or modern culture.
- The most important reasons for attending plays are to be entertained (36%) and to do something sociable, spend time with others (22%).
- 35% would be more likely to visit a music/theatre event if it started and finished earlier in the evening (e.g. by 9pm). 40% might be more likely.

Part 3: An audience centred view of your offer

Catherine Bradley
Senior Consultant, The
Audience Agency



What does your offer look like to your audiences?

What you know about it - features

- Facts about the offer – e.g. facts about the show, opening hours, location

Why they should engage - benefits

- Reasons why people will want to visit – e.g. relaxing, educational, fun, social

Feature	Benefit
A Saturday music theatre performance	A great night out with friends
A creative theatre workshop	Learn new skills, meet new people
Family show	Time to relax and have fun with your children

In practice, audience development means... inviting people to do something

**Thinking about the people you need to reach to achieve your goals,
do you really understand...**

- How people see you now?
- What they want and need?
- How to invite them?
- What you need to change to reach and engage them?
- Consider both digital and physical touch points

Design thinking approach: Invite and consult, develop, test, revise

The engagement mix

4Ps of marketing

Programme/product

Place

Price

Promotion

3Cs of community engagement

Community involvement

Content

Co-Creation



The 4 Ps of marketing

PRODUCT – your whole offer

- Core programme
- Surrounding benefits
- Which elements of your programme are aimed at different audiences?

PRICE – how much it costs

- The right price/approach
- Cost of whole trip
- Pricing policy to achieve social and financial objectives

PLACE – where, when and how you present your offer

- Where it takes place
- Timing
- Accessibility
- Your staff and your welcome
- The environment, social space etc.

PROMOTION – tools to communicate with your target audiences

- Online and offline channels
- Broadcast – generic messages, awareness, wide audience
- Targeted – tailored messages
- Partnerships

The 3 Cs of community engagement

Community involvement

Forums for decision making
Volunteering

Co-Creation

Active participation
in devising/
creating/ curating
cultural
experiences

Content

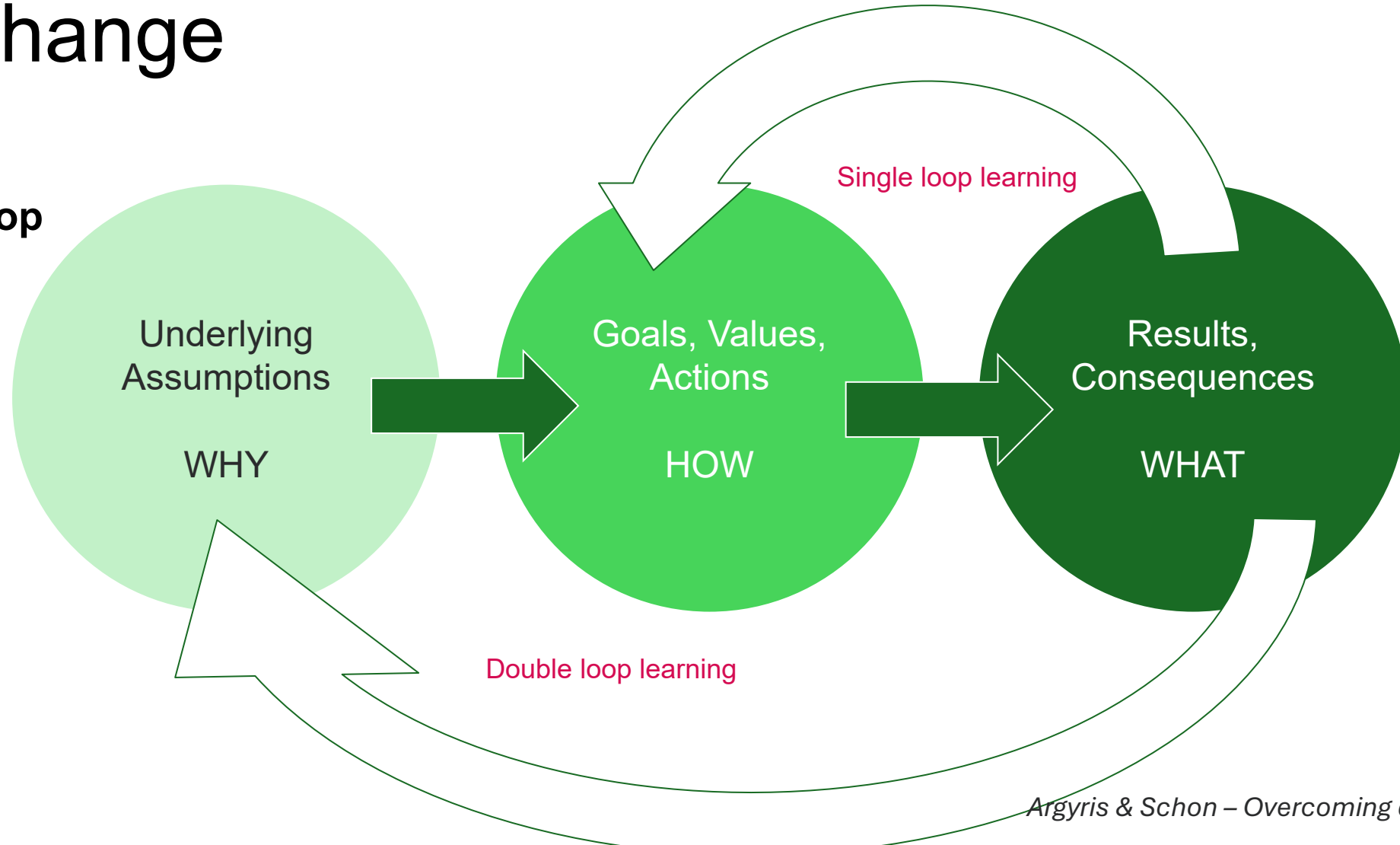
Creative or
exploratory content
- curatorial, online
etc

What are you already
doing to involve
people in decision-
making, action and
creation?

What else do you
need or want to do?

Learn through experience...and be prepared to change

Double Loop Learning



Challenge “Defensive Reasoning” – fixed ideas, prejudices, “fast thinking” = self awareness and awareness of others

[Case in Point | Peterborough Presents | The Audience Agency](#)



Part 4: Links and resources

Catherine Bradley
Senior Consultant, The
Audience Agency



Resources

Theatre Resources

[Resources | The Audience Agency](#)

Audience Development

[Audience Answers Service - Survey & Ticketing Data Collection & Analysis](#)

[Feature | What's the point of an Audience Development Plan?](#)

[Guide | Audience Development Planning](#)

[Guide | Using evidence for setting audience metrics](#)

[Guide | Audience development planning - using evidence](#)

Understanding population opportunities

[Audience Answers Dashboard – Audience Spectrum Mapping, regional insights](#)

[Places | The Audience Agency](#)

[Population Profile Reports](#)

Resources

Digital

[Digital Impact | The Audience Agency – Digital Impact and Digital Snapshot](#)

Segmentation

[Audience Spectrum | The Audience Agency](#)

[Audience Spectrum Licensing & Persona Sessions](#)

[Guide | Segmentation made simple | The Audience Agency](#)

[Feature | Meaningful Segmentation | The Audience Agency](#)

Understanding sector opportunities

[Cultural Participation Monitor | The Audience Agency](#)

[Sector Evidence | The Audience Agency](#)

[Audience Answers Dashboard – Sector and regional insights](#)

Case studies

[Case studies and community stories](#)

How we can help

Putting audiences at the centre of your planning

[Audience-Centred Design](#)

[Community Consultation Toolkit](#)

Bespoke audience development planning support

[Creating an audience development plan or supporting you through the process](#)

[Digital for Audience Development | The Audience Agency](#)

Embedding audience development across your organisation

[Organisational Workshop](#)

Thank you for listening

Catherine Bradley

Senior Consultant, The Audience Agency

Addressing underlying assumptions to building diverse audiences

Ben Payne and Gerald Richards

Directors, B&G Partners LLP

Our Mission

- To help people and organisations flourish by being more creative, clearer about their purpose and tell a better story about what they do
- We do this through coaching and consultancy, training workshops, research and facilitation.
- We have supported more than 3000 charities and CICs across many fields including arts and culture, heritage, education, DEIB and youth development

“We all know what we mean by diversity”

- Do we, though? Where does it fit in your audience development strategy?
- In some places it may mean increasing Black, Brown, and Asian audiences?
- For you, it may mean opening your doors to more disabled and deaf audiences. Or LGTBQ audiences? Or all of the above?
- It can also mean widening the social class or age of your audiences.
- What does it mean for you? Does it mean you need to prioritise?

“We once put on a show for a diverse audience and no-one came, so we’ve decided that they don’t like theatre”

- Building diverse audiences takes time and consistency of programming.
- An audience has to get to know and trust you.
- It may take time (but not a lot of time with the right commitment) to see your audiences change.
- How are you nurturing diverse creative talent? - link this back to diverse audience development
- Who is deciding what gets seen?



Case Study: NAE Voice Assembly (pilot)

NAE (New Art Exchange) - Arts Council NPO; contemporary art gallery in Nottingham promoting and producing work by global majority artists

We've worked extensively with NAE and its Director, Saad Eddine-Said over the last few years developing its own governance; that of the Nottingham Mela and delivering training for young global majority trustees

VOICE Assembly is a new initiative to give local people a leadership role in NAE starting in May. 40 applicants will be chosen by lottery

Part of [Citizens in Power](#) an initiative set up by Saad and David Jubb to explore the potential of citizens' assemblies in culture

“We’re a very welcoming space. We all know what it’s like to work at / for or come to our venue if you’re from a diverse background”

- Have you asked?
- How can you make change if you don’t understand these perceptions?
- You may be surprised (and shocked) by the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds engaging with your venue or working for it.
- How has your organisational culture changed in response
- Have you moved from a welcoming space to a space where people belong?

Case study: how to make change?

A dance venue in England (anon) - using a LGBTQ+ Changemaker

Envision a 10-year goal for change

Define 3-year key outcomes

Create a 1-year plan for change (with priorities)

Create clear scenarios to make things specific/ concrete

Who are your allies (internally and externally)?

How will you know the changes have happened?

Who owns/ leads the plan?

Where will you start first? What are the quick wins?

Recommendations

- Decide which audience(s) you mean – **prioritise**
- Create clear audience **profiles**
- Make a clear, shared plan for change - start small and iterate
- Annual or bi-annual **staff and/or audience survey** to see how your organisation is doing
- Think about how you can authentically involve staff, community, audiences in programme development (e.g NAE)
- Lean into discomfort - if you are not uncomfortable you are not doing it right
- Remember that this is a journey not a destination. You'll have to keep working at it

Thank you for listening

Ben Payne and Gerald Richards
Directors, B&G Partners LLP

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Audience Q&A

Host and Chair

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