



**MUSEUM
OF**

ENGAGEMENT





This is a summary of the Engagement Framework developed in collaboration with the Research Centre for Museum & Galleries at the University of Leicester over the summer of 2020.

Making a new museum about one of the world's great cities is a huge, exciting, somewhat daunting responsibility. It is not something we can do alone. We have worked hard to clarify what and who the new museum is for, what its place will be in the city, and what our approach will be. Now much of the work to implement our vision for a new museum lies ahead.

Our Mission

We are here to enrich the understanding and appreciation of London and all its people – past, present, future.

A home for learning, exploration and adventure, we aspire to be a force for good in London, as London must be for the world.

Our Position

London's shared place, in the middle of it all – where all the city's stories cross and collide.

How we do things

**CONTRAST AND CONNECT
PUT ON A GREAT SHOW
KEEP OUR FEET ON THE STREET
THE DOORS STAY OPEN
TAKE GOOD CARE**

ENGAGEMENT IS PART OF WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

Since it opened in 1976 the Museum of London has had a global reputation for innovation in the way it represents the lives of millions of Londoners over thousands of years in a deeply human and inspiring way. We will build on this experience and take engagement to a new level in order to create a new museum that is an inclusive, welcoming, world-class shared space for all and a force for good in and beyond the city.

To take this next step, the museum must be shaped by Londoners in a deeper way than ever before. Engagement with Londoners is fundamental to our commitment to serve existing audiences and to attracting people who have never visited us – or perhaps any museum – before.

What do we mean by ‘engagement’?

Engagement is difficult to define as it can take many forms and mean different things to different people, but for the purposes of this framework it means:

‘Working with, listening to and learning from different communities, partners and visitors to inform and enrich our work.’

The aim of our engagement work is to make the museum a better place for our audiences in the future. Engagement is therefore different to conventional public programming, but this can also be seen as engagement if it specifically sets out to inform our future practice. Engagement activities should provide value for participants as well as the museum, eg enjoyment, an increased sense of identity, belonging and being valued, or the development of skills or understanding. Some may involve offering financial or other incentives to participate, or payment in recognition of participants’ time, expertise or expenses.

How will engagement help us make a new Museum of London?

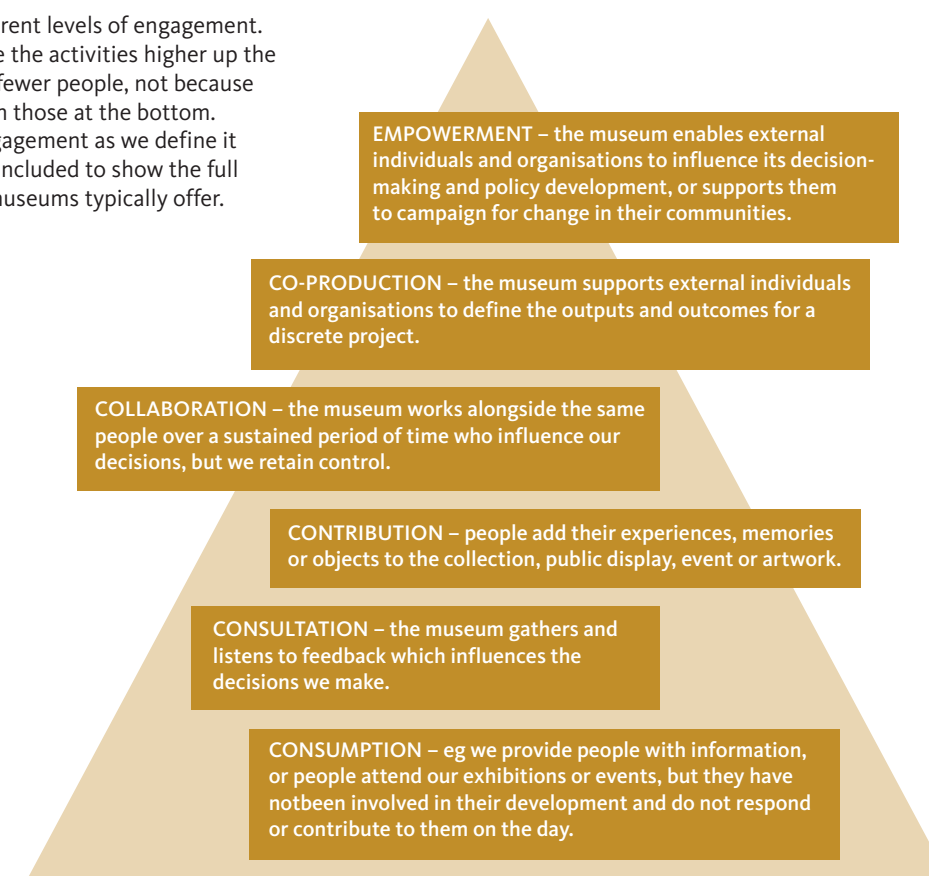
It would be impossible for Museum of London staff, even with our experience and expertise, to understand the lives of the huge number and diversity of Londoners, past and present, each a unique person with rich, distinct life experiences and views of the world.

We need engagement in order to:

- **achieve our ambition to make an inclusive museum – a shared space that is genuinely valuable to and valued by all**
- **bring in expertise we don’t have – especially the expertise of people with lived experience of different aspects of London life**
- **challenge our own thinking and practices**
- **humanise stories, so that they are meaningful for more visitors**
- **foster empathy and make emotional connections**
- **create advocates for the museum**

In practical terms this means that we will find ways for decisions we make about the new museum to be shaped by Londoners. We will enhance the roles of our audience panels and of visitor research and evaluation in influencing our decisions not only about displays, but also about shops, cafés, events, learning programmes, marketing, communications, training, recruitment and fundraising. We will work with Londoners to make sure that the museum is genuinely welcoming for all who connect with us. We will identify areas where we can go beyond consultation to jointly create displays, exhibitions and activity programmes with Londoners, working especially closely with our target new audiences. We will enable as many staff as possible to be engaged in these activities.

This diagram shows different levels of engagement. It uses a triangle because the activities higher up the diagram tend to involve fewer people, not because we value them more than those at the bottom. ‘Consumption’ is not engagement as we define it in this framework but is included to show the full range of activities that museums typically offer.



WHAT PRINCIPLES SHOULD SHAPE OUR ENGAGEMENT?

The following principles underpin our engagement work

Our engagement activities will:

Support the museum's mission and vision to be a force for good. Engagement will build the museum's capacity and capability to generate value and benefit for all.

Open up opportunities and possibilities for wide-ranging groups to create culture on their own terms. Rather than determining the outcomes of engagement, we will seek to empower participants to define outcomes that are meaningful to them, which start with their own lives and concerns, not those of the institution.

Seek to address deep inequalities in opportunity in society. Our engagement activities will be designed to involve people who can often be excluded from cultural experiences.

Be part of the museum's DNA. We will ensure that engagement is not siloed but rather central to the museum's commitment to representing the diversity of Londoners and is understood, practiced and valued across all parts of the organisation.

Involves active listening and a genuine openness to new ideas. We will make space for approaches that push the museum to be more comfortable with sharing power and being open to unexpected, sometimes challenging, outcomes.

Be based in reciprocity, generating value for participants as well as the museum.

Do no harm. Whilst we value freedom of expression, we will always ensure that our engagement with one group does not disadvantage or oppress another.

Actively resist hierarchies of expertise. We will work in ways that value and seek to bring together different forms of expertise. Forms of expertise derived from lived experience will be treated with the same respect as museum-based/ disciplinary forms of expertise.

Builds trust through transparency and accountability. Engaging with our audiences and partners on equal terms, we will utilise a range of engagement approaches – from testing and consultation through to co-production – and we will always be open about our working methods and decision-making processes.



Be visible. The museum will explore ways to make its engagement publicly visible so that its commitment to working with, listening to and learning from 100,000 Londoners is proudly shared.

Enable us to confidently participate in conversations that matter to Londoners. As we seek to engage audiences that hold diverse beliefs and opinions, we will uphold and make explicit our unwavering commitment to including and representing the full diversity of Londoners.

Change the museum. All our engagement should have some impact on the museum in some way, from informing the strategic decisions we take to affecting the look and feel of the experiences we provide, to enriching our daily relationships with visitors, communities and partners.

These principles share the core values of:

- being honest and open about what we do, as well as about London's history
- taking a caring and inclusive approach to our visitors and to the histories of all Londoners
- making engagement a museum-wide responsibility, not just a specialist function



WHO WILL WE ENGAGE WITH?

We will engage with a cross-section of all Londoners, but in particular with those whose histories have been hidden or neglected and are often under-represented in museums. These include:

- Black, Asian and ethnically diverse peoples
- LGBTQ+ people
- Disabled people
- People with lived experience of poverty
- People with low educational attainment
- Young people aged 16-24
- People of faith
- Children
- Older people

We will also engage with people who live and work in our local area, and use examples from its history to represent aspects of the wider city.

How will this benefit our visitors and the city?

All of this is designed to improve the experience of our audiences, onsite, online and in the community, to enable all of them (locally, regionally, nationally and globally) to:

- feel the museum is their place, where they can bring their family and friends, to be part of the life of the city
- find their own place in the collective story of London by drawing connections between broader histories and the stories of their own lives
- engage both their hearts and their minds, so that their understanding and appreciation of London is increased

By creating a shared place for all the city's residents and visitors, by telling honest, authentic human stories through our amazing objects, displays, programmes and online content, we hope to create a museum that will be a force for good in London and beyond.



WHERE ARE WE NOW AND WHAT NEXT?

The impact of Covid-19

At the time of writing our plans for engagement, as with other work, are being adapted to the new conditions presented by the pandemic. Connecting with people is now even more important, as marginalised groups may be even more isolated and their economic situation more uncertain. We are applying all our creativity to ensure that our online engagement is as accessible and human as everything we had planned to do in person.

Timescales and phasing

The opening of the new museum may feel far away but many key decisions need to be made now or very soon. This time is also a wonderful opportunity for us to learn from Londoners and their stories. It is useful to think about our engagement work in three phases:

PHASE 1: 2018-2020

A huge amount of engagement work has already taken place, eg through our audience panels, front-end and formative evaluation, and audience research; the consultation involved in creating the new Brand Framework; Talking Point; and our work with communities and organisations in Islington. The lessons from all this work are already being applied to the planning of the new museum.

PHASE 2: 2020-2021

In order to embed engagement across the museum, we have:

- set up a cross-museum Engagement Board that informs the Executive Board, Design Review Group and Client Steering Group
- committed to co-producing an Engagement Charter with a wide range of Londoners that will publicly and accessibly set out the principles of our engagement work and what the people we engage with can expect of us
- committed to increasing the resources we allocate to engagement work

Activities for this period will continue to deepen our engagement with Londoners, especially to shape Past Time and Our Time. Key projects include establishing an online platform for engagement work (Mighty Networks); working with community volunteers to reinterpret our oral history collection (Listening to London); Past Time participation projects to co-produce gallery content; further formative evaluation and audience research, eg relating to Our Time and Deep Time concepts, and our approach to text and language across the galleries; and building community partnerships using the model developed in Islington.

PHASE 3: 2022

New museum opening

Engagement from 2022 will focus on building the relationships, partnerships and ways of working with Londoners that will shape how our work with London's communities manifests itself in the new museum, for example in the programme of displays and events in Our Time. By the time the new museum opens, engagement will be permanently embedded in our structure and in our daily work. It will be part of who we are and 'how we do things around here'. We will ensure that everything about the new museum, from the way we process invoices and advertise vacancies to the experiences we provide in our exhibitions and events, says: This is London's shared place.



Getting involved

All departments will be encouraged to look for opportunities in their work to engage Londoners in ways that inform the creation of the new museum and influence how we as an organisation relate to our audiences. This activity is overseen and coordinated by the cross-museum Engagement Board that is chaired by the Director of Content.

Contact the Engagement team to discuss how you or your team could be part of our engagement work.

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