A Toolkit for
Qualitative Audience Engagement:

# Gathering, Analysing and Translating Impact

## Acknowledgement of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

## Toolkit authors

This Toolkit has been developed as part of the Museum Digital Social Futures (MDSF) project. This project is an Australian Research Council-funded Linkage Project and a collaboration between RMIT University, the Australian Centre for the Moving Image (ACMI) and the Australian Museums and Galleries Association (AMaGA). The MDSF project explores how audiences interact with museums and galleries using digital and non-digital media, and how museums and galleries understand their audiences.

The Toolkit was authored by Dr Jacina Leong from RMIT University and was developed in partnership with a diverse group of Industry Partners from the museum and gallery sector.

2025-09-01

## Copyright



## Contact

For more information about the Toolkit and the MDSF project please contact Dr Caitlin McGrane: caitlin.mcgrane@rmit.edu.au

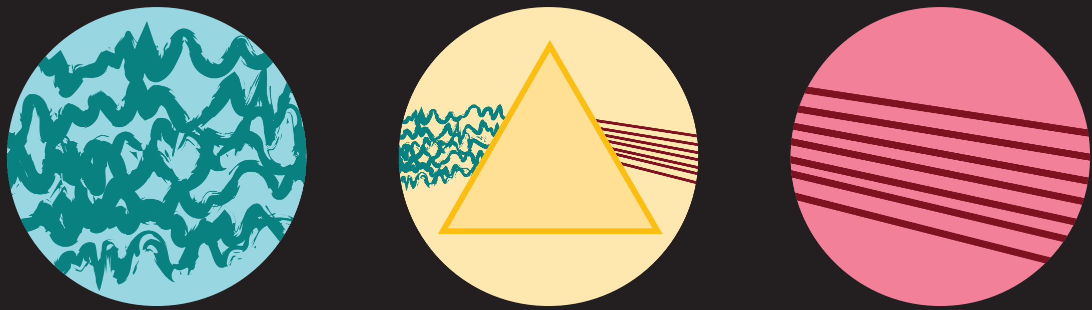
124 La Trobe Street, Melbourne VIC 3000

Website: museumdigitalsocialfutures.net

Museum Digital Social Futures

RMIT UNIVERSITY

# Contents



Gathering Analysing Translating

# Introduction

With this Toolkit, our aim is to support museums and galleries in their implementation, analysis and translation of qualitative audience engagement data. This Toolkit is designed to be practical and scalable across the museum and gallery sector and help practitioners communicate the impact to different stakeholders including funding bodies, boards and the public.

To help ensure the Toolkit is relevant and responsive to sector needs, we are inviting industry partners to test the prototype in situ. This document serves as the prototype we are asking you to trial.

**Qualitative data**
Qualitative data is information about people's thoughts, feelings, behaviours and experiences. It is often collected through words, such as interviews and conversations, but can also come from observations and speculative methods. This type of data helps us understand the meaning or intention behind what people say or do.

## Context and rationale

Across the arts sector, museums and galleries, regardless of size or location, are already collecting valuable information about their audiences. This includes formal data such as post-visit surveys, evaluation forms and website analytics, as well as informal data such as:

- Conversations at the front desk
- Anecdotal feedback shared during public programs
- Observations of where audiences linger, what they photograph or how they interact with staff
- Social media comments, direct messages or tagged visitor posts

These kinds of qualitative insights offer rich and often overlooked information about how people experience, interpret and connect with cultural spaces.

However, many institutions face challenges in making sense of and communicating this kind of impact. Through this Toolkit, we aim to help organisations connect everyday insights to larger strategic objectives, and translate qualitative data into compelling communication for governance, funding bodies and broader communities.

In interviews with museum and gallery staff, we have consistently heard that:

- Teams are working with limited resources and competing demands
- Many staff are not trained in data analysis or evaluation
- There is a tendency to prioritise 'hard' data (e.g. attendance numbers) in reporting, while qualitative data is seen as anecdotal or difficult to quantify

In response, we recognise there is a gap in the sector for tools that help organisations not only gather but interpret and share the often-intangible impacts of engagement—tools that reflect both the relational and strategic dimensions of cultural work.

Our goal is to create a flexible and scalable Toolkit, grounded in the diverse realities of the museum and gallery sector, that supports organisations to work with what they already know, in ways that feel manageable, meaningful and aligned with their existing capacities.

At the same time, the Toolkit will also offer new tools and methods that organisations with sufficient time, staff capacity or strategic interest may wish to test. These include participatory and creative approaches to sensemaking, and new ways of sharing qualitative insights. In this way, the Toolkit is not just responsive to current practices, but also invites experimentation and growth, offering different entry points depending on where an organisation is at.

The Toolkit is designed to complement existing audience research tools, not replicate them—with a focus on qualitative and creative evaluation approaches.

## What this Toolkit includes

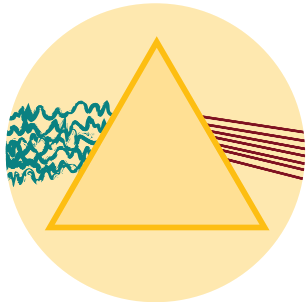
This Toolkit is divided into three parts to help you work with qualitative data—from collecting it to using it to show impact.

**Part 1: Tools for Gathering Qualitative Insights**

This section introduces different ways to collect qualitative data. It includes approaches like interviews, conversations, anecdotal evidence, observations, speculative methods and social media walkthroughs. You will find tips for planning your approach and doing this work in approachable, ethical and thoughtful ways.

**Part 2: Making Sense of Qualitative Data**

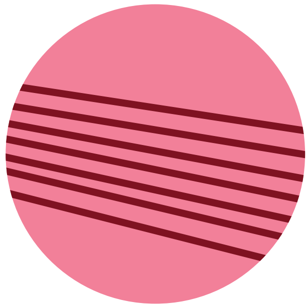
Here you will learn how to look closely at your data to find patterns, key themes and important meanings. This part includes simple ways to organise, sort and reflect on what people have said or done, so you can better understand what it all means.



Each tool in this section is designed to connect directly to a data collection method in Part 1. So, for example, if you have used a social media walkthrough in Part 1, you will find a matching analysis tool in Part 2 to help make sense of that specific kind of material.

**Part 3: Translating Qualitative Insights to Communicate Impact**

This final section helps you turn what you have learned into clear messages. It shares ideas for presenting your findings in ways that are engaging and meaningful to different stakeholders—including funding bodies, governance and audiences—using tools like storytelling, quotes and vignettes.



Each section includes templates or worksheets (where relevant) to help you implement ideas into practice.

## What we are asking from you

### Test 1 tool from each part of the Toolkit

We ask that your organisation select and trial at least one tool from each part of the Toolkit (Parts 1, 2 and 3), based on what is most relevant and manageable for your context and capacity. (Remember that each tool in Part 1 is designed to pair with a specific tool from Part 2.)

### Offer written feedback

Feedback can be given in the form of annotated comments on the Toolkit or simply emailed to us. We are particularly interested in what works, what doesn't work, what needs adapting, and how these tools land in your specific context.

To support your reflections, we have included a short set of guiding questions at the end of the Toolkit. These are designed to help you think through your experience as you test the tools, during and after the process.

### Provide verbal feedback

We will invite you to a 30-minute online debrief with the RMIT research team to share your reflections and insights from the testing process.

### Timeline

Testing of Parts 1, 2 and 3 of the Toolkit will take place between September and October 2025.

> This Toolkit is built with and for the museum and gallery sector. Your insights will ensure it remains relevant, usable and aligned with the rhythms and realities of cultural work today. A finalised version of the Toolkit, shaped by industry feedback, will be published as a free, open-access online resource in early 2026.

# Gathering

## Part 1: Tools for gathering qualitative insights

## About this section

This section presents a collection of tools for gathering qualitative insights. The methods range from observing how audiences move through exhibitions or interact with specific features, to capturing informal feedback and exploring how users navigate digital platforms. They also include more future-focused or speculative approaches for co-designing sustainable engagement strategies with colleagues and communities.

**There are five tools in this section including:**

- Audience Observations (Immersive)
- Audience Observations (From the Desk)
- Gathering Anecdotal Evidence
- Social Media Walkthroughs
- Playable Futures: Card-Based Engagement Tool

**Each tool includes:**

- Type of Method
- Intended Users
- Brief Description
- Why It Might Be Useful
- How It Can Be Used
- Pros and Cons
- Recommended Facilitation Guide
- Worksheets or Prompts (where applicable)

**Reminder**
Please select at least one tool that feels most relevant to your organisation's context and capacity to trial. You are welcome to test additional tools if time and resources allow.

## Audience Observations (Immersive Option)

**Brief Description**

This tool guides you through the method of 'shadowing' visitor/s (with their permission) as they move through a GLAM space. This method provides rich insights into how audiences experience exhibitions, interact with displays and navigate spaces. Observers may engage in natural conversations when appropriate, for example, by asking select questions, to gather both behavioural and reflective insights.

**Why It Might Be Useful**

- Builds empathy by seeing the space from the audience's point of view
- Reveals design, communication or accessibility barriers in real-time
- Supports audience-centred improvements across exhibitions and visitor services
- Provides insight into emotional, sensory and cognitive aspects of engagement

**How It Can Be Used**

- Staff Training: Foster understanding of diverse audience needs
- Exhibition and Program Planning: Evaluate how visitors engage with content and space
- Accessibility Audits: Identify challenges for visitors with different abilities
- Marketing and Communication: Map visitor touchpoints to refine messaging and signage

**Pros and Cons**

Pros:

- Rich, real-time qualitative data
- Helps surface needs not often captured in surveys
- Encourages visitor-centred thinking
- Supports iterative, user-informed design

Cons:

- Time intensive
- Potential observer effect (people may act differently when observed)
- Requires consent and privacy considerations
- Small sample sizes may not be representative

**Type of Method**

Observing how people behave.

**Intended Users**

This tool is designed for GLAM workers to actively observe visitor behaviour and experiences in detail, sometimes asking questions to deepen their understanding, without actively participating in visitor activities.

**Materials**

Audience Observation (Immersive) Log template (downloadable here)

**Recommended Facilitation Guide**

### Preparation

- Familiarise yourself with the Audience Observation (Immersive) Log template and the types of details to capture and questions to ask.
- Decide on the visitor profile(s) or segment(s) you wish to observe (e.g., families, seniors).
- Familiarise yourself and ensure you follow your organisation's established consent process for visitor engagement. This may include obtaining verbal or written consent from visitors in line with your organisation's existing policies and guidelines.
- Prepare a brief introduction to request participation and explain the process clearly. Suggested script:
  - We're working on improving our visitor experience and would love to learn from your visit today. Would you be open to us observing and occasionally asking questions as you move through the space? Participation is completely voluntary, and you can stop at any time.
- Determine whether you will be the sole observer and note-taker or if a colleague will assist with notetaking.

### Engagement Tips

- Use the Audience Observation (Immersive) Log to record the visitor's movement, engagement with exhibits, verbal and non-verbal cues.
  - Pay attention to how visitors navigate or move through the space, what catches their attention or causes confusion, how they interact with digital tools, signage, other visitors and staff.
- Ask light, open-ended questions at natural pauses, record responses in the Audience Observation (Immersive) Log.
  - Refer to the Log document for suggested questions to ask.
- Maintain a respectful, unobtrusive presence to avoid influencing visitor behaviour.
- If appropriate, at the end of the observation, you might close by asking a series of reflective questions. Refer to the Audience Observation (Immersive) Log template for suggested questions to ask.

# Audience Observations (From the Desk)

### Brief Description

This tool guides you through a method of quietly observing visitors from a fixed spot to gather insights into how they enter, move through, and respond to the space. Without following or interacting with visitors, staff record real-time impressions of visitor behaviour, helping to capture unfiltered experiences.

### Why It Might Be Useful

- Leverages everyday insights from those closest to the visitor journey
- Reveals patterns in movement, confusion, or interest
- Offers a lightweight and sustainable method to surface friction points
- Helps build a culture of informal, embedded evaluation

### How It Can Be Used

- Entry Experience: Identify common wayfinding or welcome issues
- Exhibition Engagement: Note which exhibits prompt lingering or avoidance
- Signage Effectiveness: Detect where visitors pause or look uncertain
- FAQs: Track the most common questions asked at the front desk

### Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Easy to implement during regular duties
- Low-cost and minimally disruptive
- Encourages on-the-ground staff participation in evaluation
- Can surface useful patterns over time

Cons:

- Limited depth—no direct audience feedback
- Observer's view is constrained by location
- Behavioural interpretations may be speculative
- Less suitable for understanding emotional or reflective responses

**Type of Method**

Observing how people behave from a distance.

**Intended Users**

This tool is designed for front-of-house staff, visitor services team, volunteers and / or anyone who has a consistent, clear view of public areas. When using this tool, observe visitor behaviour from a fixed position, without directly engaging with visitors.

**Materials**

Audience Observation Log (From the Desk) template (downloadable here)

**Recommended Facilitation Guide**

### Preparation

- Select a focused observation period during your shift (e.g., 30-60 minutes).
- Identify specific focus areas for observation (e.g., visitor navigation, frequently asked questions, signage clarity).
- Review the Audience Observation Log (From the Desk) template to understand what and how to record.

### Engagement Tips

- From your fixed location, use the Audience Observation Log (From the Desk) to record visitor behaviours you observe, noting where visitors pause, show confusion, or engage with exhibits.
- Record common questions or interactions at the front desk.
- Note any environmental or contextual factors affecting visitor flow or experience.
- Keep notes brief and factual; avoid assumptions without evidence.
- Respect visitor privacy by observing discreetly and not engaging unless necessary and always follow your organisation's privacy policy.

## Gathering Anecdotal Evidence

### Brief Description

This tool guides you through the method of noticing and writing down spontaneous, unprompted comments shared by visitors—things they say aloud to each other or casually mention while moving through a public space. These remarks might express delight, confusion, surprise, frustration, or connection. When recorded consistently, they offer a valuable glimpse into how people are experiencing a space, exhibition or program, in their own words.

### Why It Might Be Useful

- Captures unfiltered visitor reactions in their own words
- Surfaces themes not always visible through structured evaluation tools
- Provides insight into what stands out or confuses visitors
- Encourages staff to listen reflectively and contribute to ongoing improvement
- Allows institutions to document emotional and sensory responses

### How It Can Be Used

- Identify recurring friction points (e.g. signage, layout, digital tools)
- Pinpoint moments of emotional or aesthetic connection
- Build a collection of (anonymised) visitor quotes for reporting or communications
- Reflect on how exhibitions, space, or programs are received in real time
- Use in staff training or reflection sessions to build awareness of audiences

### Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Non-intrusive
- Requires no formal tools or prompts
- Easy to integrate into everyday staff routines
- Humanises the visitor experience

Cons:

- Risk of selective recall or bias
- Lacks contextual detail if not documented promptly
- Not generalisable (represents only what's audible and remembered)
- Must be handled carefully to respect visitor privacy and in line with your organisation's privacy policy

**Type of Method**

Listening and observational notetaking.

**Intended Users**

This tool is designed for front-of-house staff, volunteers, gallery attendants and others who are regularly stationed near exhibitions or visitor flows. It is for those who hear visitor passing comments or casual remarks during the course of their work.

**Materials**

Gathering Anecdotal Evidence Log template (downloadable here)

**Recommended Facilitation Guide**

Preparation

- Brief staff/volunteers to keep an ear out for unprompted visitor remarks, especially:
  - What people say when entering/leaving
  - Reactions to specific works or spaces
  - Expressions of joy, confusion, frustration, surprise
- Decide how staff will access the Gathering Anecdotal Evidence Log template, for example:
  - On a clipboard at front-of-house
  - As printed sheets in the break room
  - As a shared digital form on a device
- Ask staff/volunteers to use the log to record:
  - Exact wording, if possible
  - Where they were and approximate time
  - Visitor demographic, if known (e.g. family, senior, school group)

**Example Log Entries**

| Time/Location | What was said | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| 11.20am, Gallery 3 | 'I didn't realise you could touch this work. I love that.' | Spoken to a friend, standing at the tactile sculpture |
| 1.10pm, Entry | 'Where do we even go first? I'm already lost.' | Muttered by a first-time visitor at the entry map |
| 3.45pm, Exit | 'That story about the dancer made me cry.' | Said to another visitor near exit bench |

**Tips for Ethical and Responsible Practice**

- Don't record names or identifying details.
- If a visitor appears to be speaking privately, do not include the comment.
- Only record comments that are clearly shared in a public or communal space (such as an exhibition gallery, foyer or queue). If a comment seems private or is spoken quietly between individuals, do not record it. Always err on the side of protecting visitor privacy.

## Social Media Walkthroughs

### Brief Description

This tool introduces the method of a Social Media Walkthrough–a facilitated, conversation-based activity that explores how people engage with and experience social media platforms. It helps uncover how social media shapes audience perceptions, behaviours and relationships with cultural institutions.

**This method can be used in two ways:**

- **Audience-led Walkthrough** – participants guide the facilitator through their personal social media use, sharing how they interact with content and reflecting on their habits and impressions.
- **Organisation-led Walkthrough** – participants explore the GLAM organisation's social media presence and provide impressions, feedback and suggestions for improvement.

Both options aim to generate rich insights into how platforms like Instagram influence engagement with museums and galleries, revealing audience expectations, frustrations and values.

This method is also intentionally adaptable. Participants may choose to focus on aspects of digital engagement that matter to them (such as creative content, curator-led posts) and the walkthrough approach can also be extended beyond social media to other platforms and devices. This includes video platforms (TikTok, YouTube, Vimeo), streaming services (Spotify), messaging apps (WhatsApp, Messenger, Discord) and digital collection databases.

### Why It Might Be Useful

- Provides valuable insight into how audiences engage with and interpret cultural content online.
- Surfaces barriers to access, representation, or clarity that might limit social media impact.
- Offers qualitative data to help refine tone, content strategy and community-building approaches.
- Encourages dialogue around digital literacy, inclusion and institutional presence on platforms.

### How It Can Be Used

- Digital Engagement Review: Understand how audiences navigate and experience institutional accounts.
- Accessibility Audits: Identify features or language that may exclude certain users.
- Audience Research: Explore what motivates sharing, liking, commenting, or avoiding content.
- Content Strategy Planning: Co-design better, more relevant content with audience input.

**Type of Method**

An activity where, with their permission, a visitor demonstrates to you how they use or interact with social media on their phone. For example, showing how they explore content, follow links, or engage with posts. This can be led by the audience or guided by the organisation.

**Intended Users**

This tool is designed for GLAM workers to use in collaboration with audiences. It is particularly useful for staff across public programming, marketing, digital engagement and evaluation.

**Materials**

- Mobile device (yours or a participant's)
- Social Media Walkthrough (Audience-Led) template (downloadable here)
- Social Media Walkthrough (Organisation-Led) template (downloadable here)

## Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Adaptable to different platforms and user levels.
- Builds empathy and institutional awareness through audience voice.
- Generates qualitative insights with low-cost facilitation.
- Supports community-centred approaches to digital strategy.

Cons:

- Time-intensive when done with multiple participants.
- May require skilled facilitation to unpack technical, social, or emotional aspects.
- Responses are context-specific and may not generalise across platforms or audiences.
- Raises privacy and consent considerations when viewing personal profiles and should always be conducted in line with your organisation's privacy policy.

## Recommended Facilitation Guide

### Preparation

- Decide which option (audience-led or organisation-led) suits your setting or goals.
- Prepare a consent process in line with institutional policy (particularly if reviewing personal social media profiles).
- Create a comfortable, non-judgemental space for dialogue by sitting in a private, pleasant room and offering participant(s) a cup of tea or coffee where you can.
- Review question prompts in the relevant Social Media Walkthrough template and adapt where/if needed.

### Engagement Tips

#### Option 1: Audience-led Walkthrough

- Introduce the activity to the participant. Suggested introductory script: 'We're interested in learning how different people use Instagram [or other platform]. Would you be open to talking me through your profile and how you use it?'
  - Make sure they know this activity involves looking at their personal social media account and that they should only take part if they are comfortable sharing.
  - Confirm they have an account they are willing to walk through.
  - Let them know they can skip any question or stop the activity at any time. There is no pressure to share anything they don't want to.
  - Confirm verbal (or written) consent and follow your organisation's privacy policy.
- Let the participant lead. Ask open-ended questions (see Social Media Walkthrough (Audience-Led) template for suggestions).

- As you listen, write down notes and reflections. You don't need to capture every word, instead, focus on noting:
    - Key comments or quotes that reflect strong opinions, repeated ideas, emotional responses
    - Examples of content mentioned (e.g. 'liked story with artists talking', 'found reels too fast')
    - Emotion tone (e.g. curious, confused, enthusiastic, frustrated)
    - Moments of hesitation, surprise, delight
    - Usability feedback (what felt easy, hard, missing, off-putting)
- Close by thanking them and summarising the most valuable insights.

**Option 2: Organisation-led Walkthrough**

- Introduce the activity to the participant. Suggested introductory script: 'We'd love your feedback on how our organisation presents itself online. Would you be open to scrolling through our Instagram account [or other platform] and sharing your thoughts?'
    - Make sure they know this activity involves looking at your organisation's social media account and that they should only take part if they are comfortable sharing.
    - Let me know they can skip any question or stop the activity at any time. There is no pressure to share anything they don't want to.
    - Confirm verbal (or written) consent and follow your organisation's privacy policy.
- Use prompts to guide conversation. See Social Media Walkthrough (Organisation-Led) template for suggested questions.
- As you listen, write down notes and reflections. You don't need to capture every word, instead, focus on noting:
    - Key comments or quotes that reflect strong opinions, repeated ideas, emotional responses
    - Examples of content mentioned (e.g. 'liked story with artists talking', 'found reels too fast')
    - Emotion tone (e.g. curious, confused, enthusiastic, frustrated)
    - Moments of hesitation, surprise, delight
    - Usability feedback (what felt easy, hard, missing, off-putting)
- Close by thanking them and summarising the most valuable insights.

## Playable Futures: Card-Based Engagement Tool



### Brief Description

This tool involves using a creative and collaborative card game for imagining new and sustainable ways to engage audiences. Participants use a set of cards to build playful, speculative scenarios by combining categories such as Audience, Theme, Outcome, Mood and Scale (known as ATOMS). The activity encourages collaboration across teams and opens space for cross-disciplinary thinking. After creating their scenario, participants are guided to reflect on what it would take to bring that idea to life, and how it might influence current or future audience engagement strategies.

### Why It Might Be Useful

- Encourages creative and future-focused problem-solving.
- Helps GLAM workers explore bold and unconventional audience engagement approaches.
- Supports collaborative thinking across departments.
- Encourages audience-centred design by considering diverse future audiences.
- Stimulates discussion around long-term sustainability, inclusion and innovation.

### How It Can Be Used

- Strategic Planning and Program Development: Ideate new ways to engage audiences and co-create exhibitions, public programs, or services.
- Staff Training and Professional Development: Build speculative thinking skills and strengthen collaboration across teams.
- Public Engagement and Co-Design: Use in facilitated sessions with highly engaged community members to gather input and generate inclusive ideas.
- Scenario Planning and Futures Thinking: Anticipate challenges and opportunities related to digital engagement, accessibility, climate change and other long-term concerns.

### Pros and Cons

Pros:

- Supports imaginative and speculative approaches that go beyond traditional planning.
- Fosters cross-disciplinary collaboration.
- Accessible, adaptable and low-cost.
- Can be used internally or with external stakeholders.

Cons:

- Time intensive.
- May be challenging for participants unfamiliar with speculative methods.
- May not fully account for practical constraints of real-world implementation.
- Requires effective facilitation to ensure thoughtful discussion and output.

### Recommended Facilitation Guide

Preparation

- Choose who will facilitate the workshop.
- Ensure a welcoming, inclusive environment for open dialogue. This could be created by setting up in a private space and having tea, coffee and biscuits available.
- Set up space for small groups (3–5 people per group) to work collaboratively.
- Adapt workshop duration depending on time availability (this guide assumes 3 hours).
- Familiarise yourself with the card categories and guiding method questions.

**Type of Method**
Collaborative, creative and speculative thinking through card-based gameplay.

**Intended Users**
This tool is designed for GLAM workers across departments, including public programming, exhibitions, education, design, marketing and leadership. It can also be used with select audiences or a working group of highly engaged community participants

**Materials**
- Playing with the Future Card Deck (downloadable here)
- Playing with the Future Worksheet (double-sided) (downloadable here)
- Butcher's paper
- Coloured markers
- Pens (optional)
- sticky notes (optional)

**Engagement Tips**

**Step 1: Introduction (10 minutes)**

Introduce the activity and its objective. Suggested script:

- This activity invites you to explore speculative futures for sustainable audience engagement in the GLAM sector. It combines creative thinking with the collective knowledge in the room to imagine alternative possibilities for how we might engage audiences in a time of great uncertainty.

Explain speculative thinking (plain language):

- Speculative thinking means imagining and exploring possibilities beyond the present. It helps us consider future scenarios to question sector assumptions, challenge the status quo and spark new ideas.

Encourage reflection with a few rhetorical warm-up questions:

- When you think about speculative thinking (like in sci-fi or future-focused media), how do you usually engage with it?
- Do you see it as something entertaining, or as a way to explore real-world issues?
- Have you ever used speculative thinking to plan or prepare for a future situation? What was that like?

Outline the structure of the session:

- Each group will receive one set of ATOMS cards and a Playing with the Future Worksheet.
- The cards are divided into five categories:
  Audience, Theme, Outcome, Mood, Scale.
- You'll choose one card from each category and use these to build a speculative scenario about future audience engagement.
- Use the guiding questions (provided in the card set and worksheet) to help shape your ideas and think through what would be needed to bring your future scenario to life.

Emphasise: creativity, collaboration and open-mindedness.

Distribute:

- One set of cards per working group
- One Playing with the Future Worksheet
- Pens and markers (and butcher's paper and sticky notes if using)

**Step 2: Card Selection (10-15 minutes)**

Instructions to provide groups.

Choose one card from each of the five categories to create the acronym A-T-O-M-S:

- Audience – Who is the scenario for?
- Theme – What is the central idea or focus?
- Outcome – What happens in this scenario?
- Mood – What is the emotional tone or atmosphere for the audience and others?
- Scale – When does it happen, or how big is it?

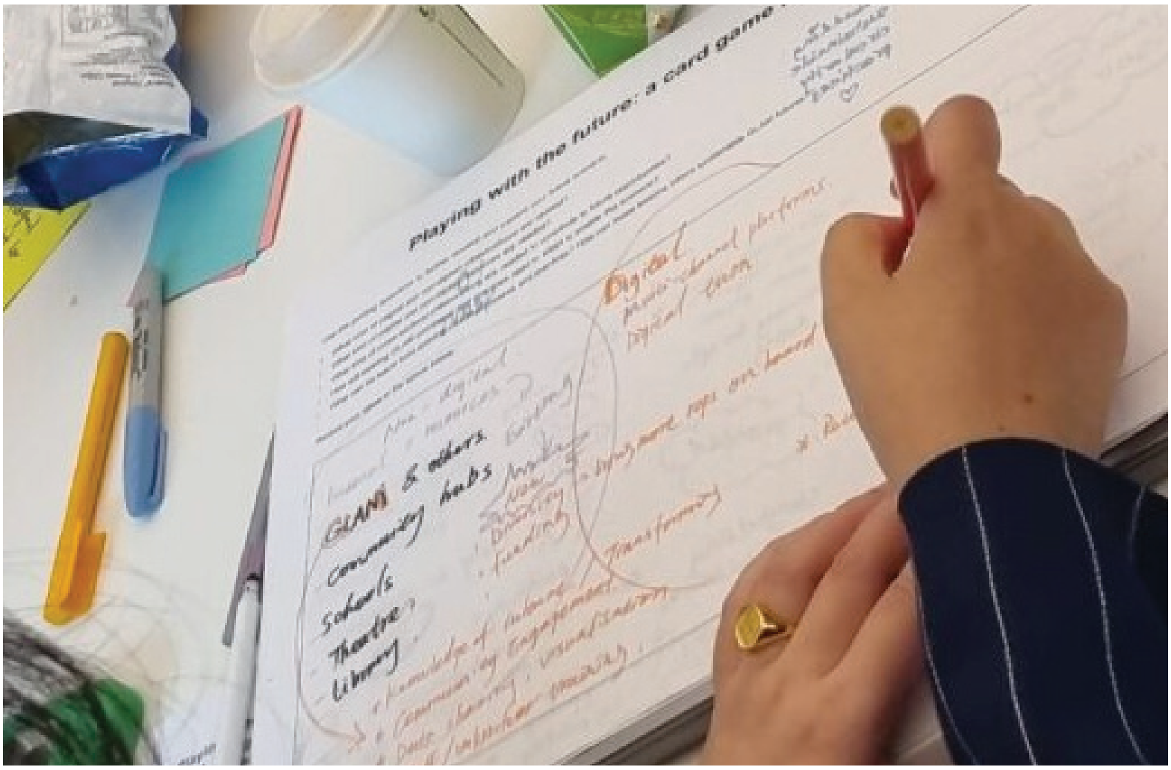
Once selected, arrange the cards face-up in ATOMS order. Participants can choose cards randomly or deliberately.

**Step 3: Scenario Development (45 minutes)**

Instructions to provide groups:

Using your five ATOMS cards, develop a speculative future scenario for sustainable audience engagement.

- Start by sharing first impressions of the selected cards.
- As a group, build these into one scenario—think creatively, and don't be afraid to explore bold or unusual ideas.
- Use the Playing with the Future Worksheet to document your ideas—through sketches, notes, maps, or short descriptions. (Groups can also use butcher's paper and / or sticky notes if they want to expand beyond the worksheet.)
- Encourage speculative thinking that pushes beyond current realities.




**Break (15 minutes)**

**Step 4: Share Initial Insights (10 minutes)**

Each group nominates someone to briefly share their idea-in-progress with the room.

Prompt: What is your emerging idea? What stands out so far?

**Step 5: Expanding the Scenario (45 minutes)**

Introduce the guiding questions included with the card set (and on the other side of the worksheet).

Encourage groups to:

- Revisit and refine their scenario using the questions.
- Think practically about what would be needed to realise their idea.
- Record expanded thoughts and ideas on the Playing with the Future Worksheet using sketches, notes and/or maps.

**Step 6: Presentation and Reflection (30 minutes)**

Each group shares their final scenario (5 minutes each).

Facilitated group reflection (open discussion):

- What common themes or ideas emerged?
- What surprised you?
- How might these speculative ideas (and / or methods) shape or challenge current GLAM practices?
- How could they be implemented in real-world contexts?

**Step 7: Closing (5 minutes)**

Facilitator wraps up with key takeaways:

- Speculative thinking helps us reimagine what's possible, challenge and reveal assumptions.
- The ideas generated today offer valuable insights into how we might design more sustainable, creative and inclusive audience engagement.

Thank participants for their time, creativity and insights.

# Analysing

## Part 2: Making Sense of Qualitative Data

## About this section

Part 2 introduces practical tools to help you make sense of the qualitative data you have gathered in Part 1. You will learn how to look closely at what people have said or done to identify key patterns, themes and deeper meanings. Each tool in this section offers simple ways to organise, reflect on and interpret your data, supporting thoughtful and grounded analysis.

The tools in this section align directly with the data collection methods introduced in Part 1. For example, if you used a social media walkthrough in Part 1, there is a corresponding analysis tool here to help you make sense of that specific kind of data.

**Reminder**

Choose one tool from this section that matches the method you selected in Part 1.

**Tools in this section include:**

- Making Sense of Observational Data
- Making Sense of Anecdotal Data
- Making Sense of Social Media Walkthroughs
- Making Sense of Speculative Scenario Data

At the end of this section, you will also find a short guide on how to share your insights with colleagues. Sharing what you've learned is an important step, not only to support collective learning, but also to spark conversations, test ideas, and strengthen your practice.

## Making Sense of Observational Data

Use this tool to analyse the data you've gathered from Part 1: Audience Observations. It will help you identify patterns in the data you collected using both Immersive or From the Desk observation tools.

This section will guide you step by step in making sense of your observational data.

### Step 1: Thematic Coding

#### What it is

Thematic coding is a way to make sense of lots of written notes by looking for repeated ideas, behaviours or comments. You assign a short phrase or 'code' to these repeated ideas and then group them together into broader themes.

#### What this step does

This step helps you make sense of the qualitative data you've collected in Part 1. It involves spotting repeated ideas, behaviours or feedback, and grouping them into bigger-picture themes. This gives you a clear overview of what's happening and prepares you for drawing insights in the next step.

#### Sample size

Before you begin, decide how much data you want to work with. You might:

- Analyse a set number of observation logs (e.g. 5–10), or
- Focus on a specific timeframe (e.g. one weekend's worth of notes), or
- Choose all logs related to a particular exhibition, space or program.

Choose a scope that feels manageable based on your team's time and capacity.

**What you need**
- Audience Observation Log notes (from Part 1)
- Post-it notes
- Butcher's paper and / or index cards
- Coloured markers
- Observational Data Summary Table (downloadable here)

**How to do it**

1. **Print or open your Audience Observation Log notes.** (If you undertook both From the Desk and Immersive Audience Observations in Part 1, you could combine your notes for analysis. Bringing these perspectives together can help build a richer and more nuanced understanding of your findings.)
2. **Read through everything once.** Get a general feel for what's been observed or recorded before diving into the details.
3. **Read through a second time and highlight anything that repeats.** Look out for recurring behaviours, comments, reactions. For example:
   a. Confusion over signage
   b. Position reactions to an artwork
   c. Difficulty using a digital screen
4. **Give each repeated pattern a short label or 'code'.** This helps you summarise what's happening in a few words. Code examples:
   a. Signage confusion
   b. Positive emotional response
   c. Tech friction

**Tip**

This is a great moment to get visual. Use large sheets of butcher's paper, coloured markers, and post it notes to:

- Write out individual comments or reactions
- Group similar ideas under your working categories
- Sport early patterns or tensions

Don't worry about getting it perfect. The aim here is to make the material easier to see and work with.


5. **Create groups of codes.** Group your codes around overarching themes. Look for clusters of codes that belong together and give the group a category name. Aim for 3–5 themes. Category examples:
    a. Navigation
    b. Engagement
    c. Accessibility

6. **Translate your findings into the Observational Data Summary Table.** This table helps you move from raw data to clear patterns and prepares you for the next step.

**Example Categories and Codes**

Below are some common categories and the kinds of patterns or codes you might notice. Use them as a guide or create your own based on what emerges from your data.

| Category | Example Codes / Patterns |
|---|---|
| Navigation | Signage confusion, entrance hesitation, unclear directions |
| Engagement | Emotional response to work, lingering time, active discussion |
| Accessibility | Difficulty using digital screens, wheelchair access issues, font readability |
| Atmosphere | Feelings of calm, overwhelm, noise levels, crowding |
| Interactivity | Use of touchscreens, reluctance to engage, enjoyment of interactive displays |
| Staff Interaction | Asking for help, positive comments about staff, confusion not resolved |

### Step 2: Insight Statements

#### What is it

Insight statements are short, clear reflections that explain what you've noticed in your data—and why it matters. They help you move from simply recording what happened to interpreting it in a meaningful way. These statements can be shared with your team, used in reports, or form the basis for improving programs, exhibitions and visitor experiences.

They'll also be useful in Part 3 of this Toolkit, where you'll learn how to communicate the impact of your work using qualitative insights.

#### What this step does

Now that you've grouped your observations into themes (in Step 1), this step helps you interpret those themes by adding meaning. You'll turn patterns into insight statements—short reflections that explain what you've noticed and why it matters—and add a follow-up question to prompt action or deeper thinking.

### How to do it

1. Return to the Observational Data Summary Table you started in Step 1. You should already have completed the first four columns.
2. Now, complete the final two columns. For each theme or pattern, write:
   a. A one-sentence Insight Statement
   b. A follow-up question to prompt action, reflection and / or discussion.

**Example**

Let's say your thematic coding highlighted a repeated issue with signage. Your thinking might look like this:

| Step | Example |
|---|---|
| Category | Navigation |
| What happened? | Many first-time visitors hesitated near the entrance and asked staff for directions. |
| What does this suggest? | The entry signage may be unclear or hard to spot. |
| Insight Statement | Many first-time visitors hesitate at the entrance, suggesting current signage may not be clear enough. |
| Prompt | How might we improve wayfinding for new visitors? |

Your completed Observational Data Summary Table might look like this.

| Category | Codes or Patterns | No. Observed | Notes / Surprises | Insight Statement | Reflection / Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Navigation | Signage confusion, asking for directions | 7 | Mostly at entry area | Many first-time visitors hesitate at the entrance, suggesting current signage may not be clear enough. | How might we improve wayfinding for new visitors? |

# Making Sense of Anecdotal Evidence

Use this to tool to analyse the data you've gathered from Part 1: Gathering Anecdotal Evidence.

This section will guide you step by step in making sense of your anecdotal data.

### Step 1: Thematic Coding

#### What it is

Thematic coding is a way to make sense of lots of written notes by looking for repeated ideas, behaviours or comments. You assign a short phrase or 'code' to these repeated ideas and then group them together into broader themes.

#### What this step does

This step helps you make sense of the anecdotal data you've collected in Part 1. It involves identifying common reactions, questions, frustrations or delights mentioned by visitors. Once grouped into broader themes, this gives you a clearer overview of what's being said and prepares you to draw insights in the next step.

#### Sample size

Before you begin, decide how much data you want to work with. You might:

- Analyse one exhibition cycle's worth of FOH notes
- Analyse one week of school holiday programming
- Analyse 10-20 overheard remarks logged over a month

Choose a scope that feels manageable based on your team's time and capacity.

**What you need**

- Anecdotal Evidence Log notes (from Part 1)
- Post-it notes
- Butcher's paper and / or index cards
- Coloured markers
- Anecdotal Data Summary Table (downloadable here)

## How to do it

1. **Print or open your Anecdotal Evidence Log notes.**
2. **Read through all the remarks once.** Get a general feel for what's been said or recorded before diving into the details.
3. **Read through a second time and highlight anything that repeats.** Look out for recurring words, sentiments, behaviours and / or emotional responses. For example:
   a. Comments about getting lost
   b. Remarks about feeling confused, surprised, delighted, or left out
   c. Visitors asking questions FOH staff had to answer repeatedly
4. **Give each repeated idea or remark a short label or 'code'.** This helps you summarise what's happening in a few words. Code examples: Signage confusion, Emotional response, Boredom.

**Tip**

This is a great moment to get visual. Use large sheets of butcher's paper, coloured markers, and post it notes to:

- Write out individual comments or reactions
- Group similar ideas under your working categories
- Sport early patterns or tensions

Don't worry about getting it perfect. The aim here is to make the material easier to see and work with.

5. **Create groups of codes.** Group your codes around overarching themes. Look for clusters of codes that belong together and give the group a category name. Aim for 3–5 themes. These might include categories like Navigation, Engagement, Interpretation, or Inclusion
6. **Translate your findings into the Anecdotal Data Summary Table.** This will help you move from raw snippets to clear patterns and prepare you for the next step.

**Example Categories and Codes**

Below are some common categories and the kinds of patterns or codes you might notice. Use them as a guide or create your own based on what emerges from your data.

| Category | Code | Example Data (Overheard Comment or Note) |
|---|---|---|
| Navigation and Wayfinding | Signage confusion | 'Where are we meant to start?' |
| | Missed galleries or rooms | 'I didn't even see that gallery.' |
| | Direction-seeking | 'Do we go upstairs now or …?' |
| Engagement and Interest | Positive emotional engagement | 'This bit was my favourite.' |
| | Disengagement or boredom | 'I kind of tuned out here.' |
| | Attention shift | 'I didn't really look at this part.' |
| Interpretation and Understanding | Lack of context | 'I wish I knew more about this artist.' |
| | Unclear context | 'That video didn't explain anything.' |
| | Information gaps | 'I don't get what this is meant to be about.' |
| Sensory or Emotional Response | Emotional impact | 'That made my cry.' |
| | Sensory overload or discomfort | 'This part was too loud.' |
| | Positive sensory experience | 'It smelled amazing in here.' |
| Accessibility and Inclusion | Physical access issue | 'I couldn't read that from my wheelchair.' |
| | Cultural recognition | 'It's nice to see something from my culture.' |
| | Language barrier | 'I wish there were translations for this part.' |
| Visitor Voice or Participation | Feeling seen/included | 'This is my story too.' |
| | Surprise at being consulted | 'I love that they asked the community.' |
| | Feeling overlooked | 'I don't think this is really for people like me.' |

### Step 2: Insight Statements

#### What it is

Insight statements are short, meaningful reflections that explain what you've noticed, and why it matters. They help you move from hearing what visitors say to understanding what that feedback means for your space, programming or communication.

These insights can inform practice, guide strategic conversations, and be shared across teams. They'll also be useful in Part 3 of this Toolkit, where you'll focus on communicating the impact of your work.

#### What this step does

Now that you've grouped your notes into themes, this step helps you interpret them. You'll turn patterns into insight statements and add a follow-up question to prompt action, discussion, or further investigation.

### How to do it

1. Return to your Anecdotal Data Summary Table from Step 1.
2. Complete the final two columns for each theme or pattern:
   a. A one-sentence Insight Statement
   b. A follow-up Reflection or Action Question

### Example

Let's say one of your themes is Engagement and several FOH staff recorded overhearing that kids were 'bored in this part'. Your thinking might look like this:

| Step | Example |
|---|---|
| Category | Engagement |
| What happened? | Several families said their kids were 'bored in this part.' |
| What does this suggest? | This may indicate that the exhibition lacks content for younger audiences. |
| Insight Statement | Families often described parts of the space as boring for kids, suggesting a need for more intergenerational touchpoints. |
| Prompt | How might we add playful or hands-on elements for family visitors? |

Your completed Anecdotal Data Summary Table might look like this.

| Category | Codes or Patterns | No. Observed | Notes / Surprises | Insight Statement | Reflection / Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Engagement | Boredom, attention drop-off, disinterest | 5 | Families noted kids losing interest halfway through | Some families described their children as 'bored in this part,' suggesting a need for more inter-generational engagement. | How might we add playful or hands-on elements for family visitors? |

## Making Sense of Social Media Walkthroughs

Use this tool to analyse feedback gathered through social media walkthroughs (either Audience-Led or Organisation-Led) in Part 1. Walkthroughs often produce open, wide-ranging conversations. This guide will help you turn those insights into themes you can use.

**What you need**
- Notes from Social Media Summary (Part 1)
- Post-it notes,
- Butcher's paper,
- Coloured markers
- Social Media Analysis Table (downloadable here)

### Sample size

Before you begin, decide how much data you want to work with. You might:

- Analyse a set number of social media walkthroughs (e.g. 5–10), or
- Focus on a specific timeframe (e.g. one weekend's worth of notes).

Choose a scope that feels manageable based on your team's time and capacity.

### How to do it

#### Step 1: Collate Your Feedback

Start by gathering all the notes you recorded using the Social Media Summary Template. This might include direct quotes, short responses, emotional reactions, or facilitator reflections.

Sort this raw material into broad working categories such as:

- **Content**—What kinds of posts were mentioned? (e.g. behind-the-scenes, event promos, memes)
- **Tone**—How did participants describe or react to the language used?
- **Design**—What comments were made about the visual feel, layout, or use of imagery?
- **Accessibility**—Was there feedback on captioning, navigation, or mobile readability?
- **Platform Use**—What habits or frustrations were shared about using the platform itself?

**Tip**

This is a great moment to get visual. Use large sheets of butcher's paper, coloured markers, and post it notes to:

- Write out individual comments or reactions
- Group similar ideas under your working categories
- Sport early patterns or tensions

Don't worry about getting it perfect. The aim here is to make the material easier to see and work with.

### Step 2: Identify Key Themes

Now take a closer look across your categories. You're looking for patterns, ideas or responses that come up repeatedly, spark strong emotions, or suggest clear tensions or opportunities.

Ask:

- Are there recurring reactions to a certain type of post, content or platform feature?
- Did multiple participants express similar emotions (i.e. confusion, delight or frustration)?
- Are there moments of surprise, hesitation or insight that might reveal a deeper issue?

Cluster what you find into 3–5 broad themes. These should capture the main messages emerging from your data, such as:

- Preference for authenticity over polish
- Posts not effectively communicating
- Difficulty accessing information on mobile
- Interest in behind-the-scenes or informal content

You might name these clusters directly on your butcher's paper or use colour-coded post its to tag them.

At this point, you might find it helpful to begin filling in the Social Media Analysis Table. This table helps you organise your thinking by connecting each category and code to a key theme and a draft insight statement. It also includes a final column to prompt reflection about what the insight means for your team or organisational strategy.

### Step 3: Write Insight Statements

Translate each theme into a short, clear insight statement.

Insight statements are short, clear reflections that explain what you've noticed in your data—and why it matters. They help you move from simply recording what happened to interpreting it in a meaningful way. These statements can be shared with your team, used in reports, or form the basis for improving programs, exhibitions and visitor experiences.

They'll also be useful in Part 3 of this Toolkit, where you'll learn how to communicate the impact of your work using qualitative insights.

**Examples:**

- Participants responded positively to short-form, informal stories, suggesting these feel more authentic than polished announcements.
- Users described the account as 'too corporate', suggesting the tone may be misaligned with how audiences typically use the platform.
- Several participants said they 'couldn't find event details', suggesting a need for clearer use of highlights or pinned content.

Each insight should help answer:

- What did we learn?
- What might we do next?

Add your insights and reflection action / question to the Social Media Analysis Table.

Your completed Social Media Analysis Table might look like this:

| Category | Code/Pattern | Key Theme | Insight Statement | Reflection / Action |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tone | Corporate tone | Tone misalignment | Users described the account as 'too corporate', suggesting a mismatch between organisational voice and audience expectations. | How might we adapt our tone to better match audience culture without losing our values? |
| Design | Confusing layout | Difficulty accessing information | Several participants couldn't find event details, indicating a need to simply layout and navigation. | What design changes could make information easier to find on mobile? |
| Content | Behind-the-scenes posts loved | Preference for 'authenticity' over polish | Audiences engaged most with informal content, suggesting a preference for real over highly produced content. | How can we build more informal, behind-the-scenes content into our regular output? |

# Making Sense of Speculative Scenario Data

Use this tool to analyse creative outputs generated through the Playable Futures card-based activity in Part 1. These speculative scenarios can surface bold ideas, deep assumptions, and values that might not emerge in everyday planning. The following steps will help you move from imaginative ideas to usable insights.

**What you need**
- Notes from Playing With the Future workshops
- Speculative Scenario Summary Table (downloadable here)
- Post-it notes
- Butcher's paper
- Coloured markers

### Sample size

Before you begin, decide how much data you want to work with. You might:

- Analyse a set number of speculative scenarios (e.g. 5–10), or
- Focus on a specific timeframe (e.g. notes from two workshops).

Choose a scope that feels manageable based on your team's time and capacity.

### Step 1: Gather and Review All Scenario Materials

Start by collating everything created during the speculative session. This might include:

- Completed Playing with the Future worksheets
- Butcher's paper notes or maps
- Sticky notes from team discussions
- Transcripts or notes from presentations and group reflections
- Any audio or photos captured (if relevant)

Review each group's scenario, first individually, then as a team.

### Step 2: Spot Repeating Patterns

Once all the material is visible, look across the scenarios to identify recurring ideas, values, or tensions. Use coloured post its or highlighters to tag similar elements.

Look for:

- Common audience needs (e.g. belonging, agency, safety, joy)
- Frequently selected Themes, Moods, or Outcomes from the card deck
- Recurring implementation challenges (e.g. resourcing, trust-building, accessibility)
- Shared assumptions about the future (e.g. increased digital integration, climate instability)

Prompt questions to ask:

- What desires or anxieties about future engagement are showing up?
- Which ideas seem imaginative but feasible, or disruptive?
- Are certain cards (or combinations) surfacing again and again?

### Step 3: Cluster Categories

Group your patterns into 3–5 overarching thematic categories. Give each a short working name that captures the essence of what's emerging.

Examples:

- Audiences as co-creator
- Decentralised, localised futures
- Climate-conscious programming

**Tip:** this process works best as a collaborative reflection session. Use butcher's paper, coloured markers and post it notes to map shared patterns and themes across teams and visualise recurring themes. The more you externalise and discuss the material, the easier it will be to spot what's meaningful.

### Step 4: Draft Insight Statements

Then, write a short insight statement for each theme. Insight statements are short, clear reflections that explain what you've noticed in your data—and why it matters. They help you move from simply recording what happened to interpreting it in a meaningful way. These statements can be shared with your team, used in reports, or form the basis for improving programs, exhibitions and visitor experiences.

They'll also be useful in Part 3 of this Toolkit, where you'll learn how to communicate the impact of your work using qualitative insights.

Examples:

- Many groups envisioned self-directed or co-created programs, suggesting strong interest in flattening institutional hierarchies.
- Several scenarios emphasised emotionally resonant content, suggesting audiences may crave slow and affective digital experiences.
- Repeated inclusion of climate references suggests an urgency to embed environmental care into future engagement models.

Then, add a reflection or action prompt for each insight. This final step helps move from understanding what was imagined to thinking about what this might mean in practice. Use these questions to spark discussion:

- What could this mean for our strategy, programming, or ways of working?
- Is there something we could try, test or explore further?

Use the Speculative Scenario Summary Table to organise and capture your ideas.

Your completed Speculative Scenario Summary Table might look like this.

| Category | Key Ideas or Patterns | Supporting Scenario(s) | Insight Statement | Reflection / Action Question |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Audience as co-creator | Co-design, self-directed journeys, collaborative storytelling | Group 1: Decentralised programming in public parks.<br>Group 2: Visitor-curated pop-ups. | Participants imagined co-created programs, suggesting a desire to flatten institutional hierarchies and centre audience agency. | How might we meaningfully involve audiences in designing future programs? |
| Climate-conscious programming | Outdoor formats, sustainability values, localised delivery | Group 1: Solar-powered exhibitions<br>Group 5: Carbon-zero mobile lab | Repeated reference to environmental impact suggests a need to embed climate care into audience engagement strategies. | How could sustainability shape the way we deliver and design programs? |

## Sharing Insights Internally: Building a Culture of Learning

### Why share insights internally?

Before moving on to external communications (Part 3), take time to share and reflect on your insights internally. This step ensures your organisation can act on what you've learned by embedding insights into strategy, practice, and everyday decision-making.

Internal sharing builds shared understanding, aligns teams around key findings, and empowers staff to act on what has been learned. It also fosters a culture of collaboration, responsiveness, and continuous learning. Insights are most impactful when they're reflected on, discussed, and embedded across the organisation before being communicated outward.

### Reflection questions for internal insight sharing

Use these prompts to support team reflection or cross-departmental discussions:

- What insights challenge or confirm our current assumptions or practices?
- How might different teams or roles interpret or use this insight?
- What actions or changes might these insights prompt within our organisation?
- How do we ensure insights are accessible and meaningful across diverse staff?
- Who in our organisation is best placed to champion or share this insight further?

Part 3 will guide you in tailoring your qualitative insights to diverse audiences, choosing the right messages and formats, and linking insights to strategic priorities—so your work's impact is understood, valued and acted upon.

You may want to use an Internal Communication Planning Table (example below) to plan and track your internal sharing. It helps clarify what key messages you want to share internally, who needs to know them, the purpose behind sharing, and the best ways to communicate. This simple tool helps ensure insights reach the right people in a timely and meaningful way, supporting reflection and informed action within your organisation.

| Message (Insight) | Who needs to know | Purpose/desired action | Format/channel |
|---|---|---|---|
| Audience feedback highlights access challenges | Program team, Front of house | To adapt event timing and improve access | Team meeting, internal email |
| Positive community response to climate-themed exhibition | Marketing, Program team | Leverage for advocacy and partnership building | Presentation, report |

Now that you've shared and reflected on insights internally, you're ready to communicate them effectively to external stakeholders.

# Translating

**Part 3: Translating Qualitative Insights to Communicate Impact**

## About this section

Part 3 helps you translate the qualitative insights you have gathered and analysed into compelling communications that support decision-making, advocacy, reflection and accountability.

Insights create change when they're shared, understood and acted on. Whether you're communicating with internal teams, boards, funding bodies, partners or audiences, this part of the toolkit offers practical and adaptable ways to:

- Communicate qualitative findings to a range of stakeholders
- Translate insights into strategic narratives
- Support learning, relationship-building and advocacy
- Build confidence using non-numerical (quantitative) evidence to show impact

You will find tools for:

- Matching communication to stakeholder needs
- Turning a quote into a story of impact
- Connecting insight to strategic priorities
- Sharing what matters with clarity

**What is Qualitative Impact?**

Qualitative impact isn't just about 'telling stories'. It's about:

- Highlighting shifts in experience, engagement or perception
- Revealing audience needs, values and aspirations
- Showing how and why your work matters

## How to share your qualitative insights

### Step 1: Define your purpose

Before sharing your insights, take time to clarify why you're communicating them. Understanding your purpose helps shape what you choose to share, how you frame it, and who you share it with. It ensures your communication is intentional, strategic, and aligned with the outcomes you're aiming to support, whether that's influencing a decision, advocating for change, or deepening engagement.

**Ask:**

- What do we want this insight to do?
- What decision, reflection, or action might it inform?
- Are we reporting back, advocating, showing responsiveness, or building understanding?

**Common purposes include:**

- Supporting strategic decisions
- Demonstrating responsiveness to feedback
- Advocating for support or change
- Sharing learning or highlighting impact

### Step 2: Know your audience

Different stakeholders care about different things. Tailoring your insight to their needs, values and preferred formats helps it land.

**Ask:**

- Who are we communicating to?
- What do they value?
- What type of language or format works best for them?

**Stakeholder Alignment Table**

Use the Stakeholder Alignment Table below to guide how you tailor your communication

| Stakeholder | What they value | What they need to hear | Effective formats |
|---|---|---|---|
| Board members | Strategic alignment, organisational performance, reputational risk | How this insight supports the strategic plan, mission and/or governance priorities | Executive summary, strategic staff report, annual report |
| Funders/Donors | Tangible outcomes, accountability, equity, social impact | Evidence of effectiveness, innovation and reach | Impact case study; outcome-quote pairing; infographics in annual report; testimonial with KPI |
| Executive Leadership / staff | Operational relevance, cross-team learning, staff morale, delivery on KPIs | How insight can inform program design, team planning and/or organisational direction | Internal report, visual summary in slides, learning session, annotated insights deck |
| Community Partners | Reciprocity, relevance, shared values, cultural safety, ongoing trust | How the work reflects, responds to or evolves with community voices and concerns | Quotes from community, short video or photo story, community meeting or forum, annual report |
| Audiences | Accessibility, inclusion, representation, organisational purpose, quality of experience | How their feedback shaped the work and how they are reflected in what's offered or changed | Social media post, feedback carousel, behind-the-scenes reflection story |
| Policymakers | Social cohesion, civic participation, wellbeing, economic and social return on investment | How engagement leads to improved access, belonging and/or measurable community benefit | Policy brief, quote-statistic pairings, infographic snapshots, short briefing session |

**Step 3: Select what to share**

Choose insights that best serve your purpose and speak to your audience. Don't try to include everything—focus on what's most relevant and resonant.

Prioritise insights that:

- Align with your communication purpose
- Are supported by strong, illustrative quotes
- Highlight clear implications or opportunities
- Reflect diverse voices and perspectives

Pull from your Insight Summary Tables (developed in Part 2) and select:

- Short insight statements (your thematic takeaways)
- Supporting quotes or scenarios (that bring the insight to life)
- Reflections or surprises (to show depth, learning, complexity)
- Evidence of changed perspectives, behaviours, or relationships

**Step 4: Choose a format**

Match the insight to the format that best serves your audience and purpose. Refer to the Stakeholder Alignment Table for examples.

**Step 5: Link to action, change or strategy**

Make it clear how the insight connects to what matters most—whether that's your organisation's strategic goals, values or future plans. This helps position qualitative insights as critical evidence for reflection, learning and growth, not just nice-to-know anecdotes.

Ask:

- What changed (or could change) as a result of this?
- How does this align with our values or strategy?
- What next step, shift or reflection does this insight call for?

Use the table below as an example of how you might map your insight to strategic goals or future directions:

| Insight | Strategic Priority / Goal | Implication / Opportunity | Recommended Action or Message |
|---|---|---|---|
| 'We felt really seen and heard at this event.' | Goal 1: Deepen community engagement | Validates inclusive practices; could scale or replicate | Use in future engagement planning and reporting |
| 'I never thought art could connect to climate issues.' | Goal 3: Embed sustainability in programming | Shows audience learning; validates program direction | Highlight in advocacy or partnership pitch |
| 'The timing of events makes it hard to participate.' | Goal 2: Improve access and inclusion | Suggests need to adapt timing or logistics | Feed into scheduling review process |
| 'It changed how I think about colonial histories.' | Core Value: Truth-telling and decolonisation | Shows critical engagement; supports deeper decolonial practice | Use in reflective reporting and stakeholder briefings |

### Language for impact

Communicating qualitative impact isn't just about telling stories—it's about showing how your work makes a difference in ways that are felt, understood, and acted upon. The language you use can help make those shifts legible to others: whether funders, boards, peers, or communities.

This section offers practical phrases and adaptable sentence templates to help you find the words for what you've observed, heard, and learned.

Remember: Qualitative insights often involve personal stories, vulnerable reflections, or community perspectives. When sharing:

- Respect confidentiality and anonymity where needed
- Be culturally sensitive and ethical in how quotes or stories are shared
- Balance honesty with positivity and constructive framing

This builds trust with your audiences and honours the integrity of the voices represented.

**Sentence Templates**

Use these sentence starters to frame your insights. Mix and adapt them based on your audience and purpose.

| | |
|---|---|
| **To show change or shift** | • Participants reported a shift in their understanding of…<br>• This work helped people reconsider…<br>• We observed new awareness emerging around…<br>• It changed how people engage with… |
| **To highlight responsiveness** | • In response to community feedback, we adjusted…<br>• This insight confirmed the importance of…<br>• We heard consistent reflections on…, prompting us to…<br>• This feedback validated our direction on… |
| **To connect to strategy or values** | • This insight reflects our commitment to…<br>• It aligns with our strategic goal of…<br>• These findings support our broader aim to…<br>• This contributes to our long-term priorities in… |
| **To express learning or emergent needs** | • What emerged was an unexpected insight into…<br>• We learned that our audience values…<br>• This revealed a gap in…<br>• It surfaced a need for deeper engagement with… |
| **To support case-making** | • This strengthens the case for investing in…<br>• Findings suggest strong community demand for…<br>• This demonstrates the potential of arts-based approaches to…<br>• Building on this success, we aim to… |
| **To integrate stories or quotes** | • As one participant shared, '[quote]'—a reflection that captures the broader sentiment around…<br>• This quote speaks to the emotional impact of…<br>• Hearing this story helped us understand… |

**Key Phrases List**

These phrases can be incorporated into reports, pitches, funding applications, or presentations to make qualitative data feel legible and purposeful.

| | |
|---|---|
| **To describe change or impact** | • Led to a shift in thinking around…<br>• Deepened awareness of…<br>• Challenged assumptions about…<br>• Created space for reflection on…<br>• Encouraged more inclusive approaches to… |
| **To reflect participant voice** | • Participants told us…<br>• A recurring theme was…<br>• Voices from [community/group] highlighted…<br>• What we heard was… |
| **To show responsiveness** | • Informed how we adapted…<br>• Prompted a shift in our programming…<br>• Guided us to prioritise…<br>• Supported our direction toward… |
| **To align with values or strategy** | • Aligned with our values of…<br>• In line with our strategic goal to…<br>• As part of our commitment to…<br>• Demonstrates progress toward… |
| **To describe learning or insight** | • An unexpected insight was…<br>• Revealed a deeper understanding of…<br>• Surfaced values such as…<br>• Opened up new questions around… |
| **To show broader value** | • Demonstrates the role of creative practice in…<br>• Shows the cultural value of…<br>• Underscores the importance of arts-based methods for…<br>• Highlights the contribution of community-led work to… |

## Questions for reflection while testing toolkit

Your feedback matters. Reflections shared during testing will directly inform future developments of this toolkit, including the creation of an open access, online version designed to support arts and cultural practitioners across diverse contexts. Your insights will help ensure the toolkit is practical, inclusive, and grounded in real-world needs.

### Relevance

- How do these practices fit into your everyday work?
- Which parts of the toolkit feel most relevant to your current role?
- Are there any sections or tools you feel unlikely to use? Why?

### Clarity and Flow

- Did the toolkit flow in a logical way from one part to the next?
- Were the instructions clear and easy to follow?
- Were there any moments where you felt stuck, confused or unsure what to do next?

### Practicality and Use

- How easy was it to apply the methods using your own data or context?
- Did the tools or templates help you analyse or make sense of your findings?
- What adjustments (if any) did you make to better fit your time, capacity, or context?

### Gaps and Improvements

- Was anything missing that would have made this more useful? (e.g. more examples, definitions, facilitation tips, printable templates)
- Are there methods or tools you wish had been included?
- What would make this toolkit easier to use with others (e.g. your team, artists, community)?

### Reflections

- Did any insights or patterns emerge that surprised you?
- How did it feel to use this toolkit—did it support reflection, conversation, or decision-making?
- How might you use this again in the future?