

Let's Meet Halfway: Authentic Community Engagement for Local Museums

This is a list of questions that can help your organization with your community engagement efforts.

Audience Assessment

1. Specifically define your audience. You may need to define a secondary audience as well.
2. As yourself if they care about your goals. Should they care about your goals? Why or why not?
3. What does your intended audience care about the most? What are their primary concerns?
4. Have you engaged with this audience before? How did it go? How long ago? How engaged are they currently?
5. What obstacles might they face in engaging with you?
6. In a perfect world, what would you want them to do? How does this align with what your audience wants to do? How can you meet in the middle?

Strategies for Success

1. Get out of your comfort zone and meet your audience where they are.
2. Practice clear, honest communication so your audience knows your mission and concrete goals.
3. Mitigate power dynamics by ensuring that your audience is responded to and included in relevant decision-making. Avoid paternalism.
4. Allow for uncomfortable feelings to be expressed. Sometimes, communities need to let off some steam because they have been ignored or because institutions have taken them for granted.
5. Move forward with a spirit of inclusion and keep your eyes on mutually beneficial outcomes.