

Power to the People: Video Transcript

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Sharon Heal, Director, Museums Association: We wanted to create a framework to help museums and people who work in museums to improve and understand where their participatory practice and community engagement is at, because we know that this kind of community engagement is really good for the participants, and it also helps to build sustainable organisations. So, it's good for the community and it's good for the museums. Whether you're thinking about working in this way or whether you're already established in this practice, this is the framework for you.

Thanh Sinden, Participatory Practice Consultant: Communities can be local, physical or remote and virtual, and really, it's the groups that we belong to you the relationships that we build. Museums need to know who's in their local area, who they're for, who their communities are, so that they are really part of the community.

Laura Pye, Director, National Museums Liverpool: Community can mean a whole range of different things communities of interest, communities of geography, communities of values. There's lots of different types of communities, and people belong to more than one

Why does it matter?

Thanh Sinden: Museums need to be relevant to the people around them. When you co-design work together it secures and fosters commitment and responsibility from your communities to the work you do.

Leigh Venus, Operations Manager (Culture and Heritage) Groundwork South Tyneside and Newcastle Upon Tyne): We're custodians of the community story. It's their history and we're there to showcase it for them and to involve them in it, but I don't think we're there to tell them what their story should be.

Kim Streets, Chief Executive, Museums Sheffield: What we need to be able to do as a sector is hear many stories and make space for many stories to be told and many voices to be heard, so it is a process that continues.

The Power to the People Framework.

Sharon Heal: The beauty of this framework is that, not only will it support more community engagement and more participatory practice in museums, it's recognised by funders as a document that if you use it, it will demonstrate to funders and other stakeholders that you're keen to establish those really close relationships and they're keen to support that work going forward.

Régis Cochefert, Director, Grants and Programmes, Paul Hamlyn Foundation:

After years of working with a set of partners all across the country we identified barriers to embedding deeper participation. We also came up with a set of tools which can enable organisations to overcome some of these barriers.

Thanh Sinden: So the framework shows organisations what success looks like and, importantly, the steps that they can take. The important thing to remember is that everyone would be a different place on this framework. Nobody is leading by example in all areas and aspects

Régis Cochefert: It's not about rating them or saying good or bad, it's just supporting them on a continuum, on a journey.

What does participatory practice look like?

Clara Shields, Project Coordinator, Tyne and Wear Archive and Museums:

Museums are for the people.

Ronan McConnell, Education Officer, Tower Museum: Community for us is our bread and butter.

Tonya Nelson, Director of Museums and Cultural Programmes, University

College London: We worked with local Egyptian and Sudanese communities living in London to curate a set of galleries. We really thought about how to bring those communities into the practice.

Victoria Rogers, Museums Manager, Cardiff Story Museum: The themes that we were looking at, the stories the objects that we were going to be showing, but also the colours of our logo, the typefaces and font sizes that we were using - they were all decisions that were made together.

Caroline Hall, Collections Manager, Blackpool Council: The people who performed - acrobats, jugglers, musicians, dancers and their audiences - are all part of Blackpool community. They're very grateful to us for recognising the contribution circus has made to Blackpool and for preserving. what they see is their heritage.

Ronan McConnell: We're really proud of our object handling workshops. It's been incredible and because the collection is contentious and the collection often invites a lot of pain, and so for the community to come in and emotionally connect with it and feed that back to us, that for us is just a huge success.

Clara Shields: We've been doing some really interesting work over the last twelve months and with different community groups of women that wouldn't ordinarily engage with the museum, and slowly we are started to see some of those community members access our buildings access our collections, so we're really proud of what we feel like we've achieved.

Caroline Hall: We have knowledge now on what is involved in developing circus skills and the community relationships behind the scenes which we wouldn't have been able to get any other way.

Tonya Nelson: It's about getting those different viewpoints on the collections and understanding new ways in and new insights, and the only way we can do that is actually getting the voices and the views of people from our communities.

Using the Framework

Rachel Thain-Gray, Project Coordinator, Glasgow Women's Library: I think it's fantastic to have the framework in place to have these indicators of where organisations are on their journey.

Caroline Hall: The framework has allowed us a quite crucial time to look at where we're doing well, where we're hitting the markers.

Leigh Venus: We've got a lot of what's in the framework already built into what we do in terms of leadership and governance.

Caroline Hall: But then it's also allowing us to see where we've missed something - Have we thought of that?

Leigh Venus: I think we still have work to do around engagement with our staff, our volunteers, and in many ways we're still at the starting off phase.

Ronan McConnell: Wherever you feel you're at, you can still make use of what's happened before

Victoria Rogers: I think where we can certainly do better is building in more reflection time.

Ronan McConnell: We dove feet-first into participation and now we're at the stage where we just want to evaluate what we've done, and that's why the framework is going to be really important for moving us forward.

Sharon Heal: The only way I think to build sustainability into the heart of our museums is putting the community in the heart of our museums and allowing them to have the decision-making power over what we do next.