

FACTSHEET 8: EVALUATION OF EXHIBITIONS

THIS FACTSHEET RELATES TO QUESTION 5.3 OF THE MSPI
(MUSEUM STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND)

1. Evaluation of Exhibitions: Visitor Survey

The following questions are minimally suggested for use in the Visitor Survey. These questions can be adapted to use with regard to both permanent and temporary exhibitions.

Museums may use these or customise their own survey based on the Guidelines.

- 1) Would you recommend this exhibition to friends? If not, why not?
- 2) What did you like most about the exhibition?
- 3) What did you like least?
- 4) Have you any suggestions as to how we could improve it?
- 5) Did you learn or gain anything from the exhibition?
- 6) Would you come back yourself?

The respondent may recommend the exhibition to a friend but, having seen the exhibition once, may feel no need to return themselves. This has implications for future repeat visits.

The form must also have a space to note the nationality, age, and family unit of the respondent.

See also Factsheet 7: **Exhibition Standard** for guidance on the difference between the Evaluation of Exhibitions Visitor Survey (5.3) and a general Visitor Survey (7.7; 7.8). Factsheet 7 also suggests a further range of questions that may deepen your understanding of visitor responses to your exhibitions.

2. Survey Methodology

- Survey a minimum of 100 people to achieve a large enough sample base
- Undertake the survey in the summer months:
 - There are more visitors so the survey is easier to carry out
 - There is more likely to be a mix of visitors from different countries
- Use an interviewer - if a form is left for visitors to fill in themselves only conscientious or interested parties will complete it and the return will be biased
- The survey can be conducted by anyone - there is no need to use a trained market researcher
- To ensure impartiality, use student or a non full-time member of staff to conduct the survey and record responses
- Choose a neutral way to select respondents - for example, every third person exiting the exhibition may be asked to do the survey

3. Survey Frequency

A survey of the exhibitions in a museum should be conducted at least once in the five year accreditation cycle. This is the minimum standard according to the Guidelines.

- If the exhibition remains unchanged there may be no benefit in repeating the survey
- If changes are made to improve the exhibition it is recommended that the survey be repeated
- The results of the survey must be documented for reference for future improvements and reporting purposes

4. Analysing the Data

Questions 1 and 6:

- 1) Would you recommend this exhibition to friends? If not, why not?
- 6) Would you come back yourself?

These can be analysed as '74% said yes' and '26% said no' in text or graph form.

Questions 2, 3, 4 & 5

- 2) What did you like most about the exhibition?
- 3) What did you like least?
- 4) Have you any suggestions as to how we could improve it?
- 5) Did you learn or gain anything from the exhibition?

A pattern will emerge from the survey with several main elements arising for each of these questions. A grid of results or a short (5 page) report can demonstrate the analysis of the results.

The results can be used as part of the basis for a development plan for the coming year(s). The assessment should take no more than two days but may greatly influence decisions made about the future development of exhibitions in the museum.

Notation of nationality, age, family unit of the respondent:

This information is important to contextualise the responses. For instance, maybe all family units will comment about a lack of interpretive material, or all non-English speaking nationalities may comment about the lack of language provision.

The results must also be assessed in relation to visitor statistics data (see Questions 7.7 and 7.8 in the MSPI Standards and Guidelines).