

Bounce Forwards

Using Evidence To... Re-open Theatrical Venues

Our *Using Evidence To...* route-maps are designed to help you navigate your own data and The Audience Agency's resources to clear key hurdles for bouncing forwards.

While the ability and process for re-opening indoor venues - theatres and concert halls - may not be straightforward, evidence shows that a certain proportion of existing audiences are keen to get back. So, in preparation for welcoming audiences, and seeking out how to engage new ones, here are some examples of evidence you can use to guide you. We're learning all the time and as venues open up we'll be increasing the insight and evidence we can use to understand and predict who is returning for cultural experiences.

With that in mind, here are 5 things to consider:

1. Understanding your usual audiences
2. Understanding your digital audiences
3. Understanding audiences' experience of and response to COVID-19
4. Aligning audiences and the return environment
5. Monitoring audience profile, experience and feedback once they attend

1. Understanding your usual audiences

- **Question** | Where can I find up-to-date information on my audiences?
Evidence | If you have been contributing data to [Audience Finder](#), take the time to mine through it to refresh your understanding of your audiences, whether you have ticketing data and use the Audience Finder dashboard, Show Stats for your tours or audience monitoring surveys. You may also have other sources that are worth digging out, or you could get in touch with those organisations you work with most closely to see what they might be able to tell you. This will give you information on:
 - Audience profiles and behaviours - using [Audience Spectrum](#), demographics, group make-up, frequency and recency data.
 - Audience motivations and satisfaction.
 - Your core, most enthusiastic audiences.
- **Question** | Who is likely to want to come back soonest when we re-open?
Evidence | Check out our resource on [Audience Spectrum in the time of COVID-19](#) and refer to your own audience profiles. By engaging with your most enthusiastic audiences first, they can be your ambassadors for encouraging wider audiences to return.

2. Understanding your digital audiences

- **Question** | Who is engaging with your digital work? And are they similar to or different from your physical audiences?
Evidence | Make sure you have your digital analytics set-up in the right way to track your digital audiences - for top tips sign up to our [digital evaluation webinar](#). And use our [Digital Audiences Survey](#) to get deeper information about who they are and their experiences digitally. Then you can put what you find in the context of audiences for physical work in terms of key metrics of geography and age range, and - if you do the survey - wider metrics including [Audience Spectrum](#).
- **Question** | How likely are your digital audiences to attend your venue?
Evidence | If you use the [Digital Audience Survey](#) you can ask them. Or set-up some pop-up questions on your website or social media platforms with some key questions about what else they may be interested in. [Audience Spectrum](#) portraits will also tell you about how likely different profiles are to engage digitally for culture.

- **Question** | Will offering digital engagement along with physical grow audiences?
Evidence | We understand that some people engage digitally who don't engage physically (see our [case study](#) on National Galleries digital audiences for some insights) and that digital exclusion means that you cannot reach all parts of society with a digital offer. However, it is still very important to think about what you are offering digitally and to whom. Our [report](#) on digital engagement for Creative People and Places gives some key insight into developing a digital offer in areas of low cultural engagement.
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3. Understanding audiences' experience of and responses to COVID-19

- **Question** | How have your audiences found lockdown? What cultural experiences have they engaged with during this time?
Evidence | Check out our resource on [Audience Spectrum in the time of COVID-19](#) - drawing on wider surveys and data being generated.
- **Question** | When and how are they likely to re-attend your venue? What are the key factors that would affect that?
Evidence | Draw on available surveys in your nation - in [England](#), in [Scotland](#) - which indicate who is most likely to return and what factors are at play in their decisions to return. Keep checking out further resources that we'll publish on the wider national picture in the [Evidence Hub Resources Roundup](#).
- **Question** | Who is there in my local area who might attend, even if they don't already? What might their barriers be?
Evidence | If you are thinking that there are audiences who make up a large proportion of your own catchment area, but who have not yet made up a significant proportion of your current audiences... then explore who they are by using population data such as our [Area Profile Report](#); [Engagement Area Profile Report](#); [Taking Part Survey Interactive Online Tool](#); or look at the [Audience Spectrum mapping](#).

4. Aligning audience needs and the return environment

- **Question** | What are audiences' motivations for attending? Have these changed post COVID-19?
Evidence | Think about which audiences may return soonest using the resources listed here and relate this to your usual audiences. What were their motivations pre-Covid-19, and how likely are they to have changed in a new environment? Understand their needs, concerns and how you can ensure they feel comfortable and safe. It may be that your most frequent audiences are the most cautious, but a smaller proportion of your usual audiences may be very willing to come out. You can also of course talk to them yourself - through a short survey or (socially distanced) conversations digitally or in the open air.
- **Question** | How can you best communicate to audiences the experience to expect at your venue?
Evidence | Consider your different audience groups - who's going to come back soonest, what they'd like to see - and tailor your messages and information accordingly. Audiences will be looking for much more information about what they can expect than they previously required. It might be useful to think how other sectors are having to think in terms of Track and Trace so that you can apply the same approaches. Our [masterclass](#) on this may help you to communicate effectively with your audiences.

5. Monitoring audience profile, experience and feedback once they attend

- **Question** | How can I track who's buying tickets and how it compares to previous years?
Evidence | Have a look at our [tracker insights](#), using Audience Finder data, to see the pattern of bookings over the years and we'll be adding forecasting insights to this as ticket buying gets underway.
- **Question** | Which types of audience and group types reattend first? How does that change over time?
Evidence | [Audience Finder survey and ticketing](#), comparisons in the [Audience Finder](#) dashboard by quarter, or download of responses and analysis by date, including [Audience Spectrum](#) profiles, previous attendance, group type. Venue ticketing system.

- **Question** | How do your post-Covid visitors compare to your previous visitors?
Evidence | Audience Finder survey and ticketing, comparisons in the Audience Finder dashboard to same quarter in a previous year, or more detailed timescale splits in Enhanced Dashboard. Venue ticketing system.
- **Question** | How satisfied are your visitors when they attend? Is this different for first-time or repeat attenders? How does it compare to before?
Evidence | Audience Finder survey, comparisons in the Audience Finder dashboard, including Audience Spectrum profiles, previous attendance, satisfaction; front of house staff feedback; other customer feedback processes; social media and online reviews, including sites like Tripadvisor.
- **Question** | What is the likely word-of-mouth response? What may you need to change in your new configuration?
Evidence | Audience Finder survey download of free text response, satisfaction, likelihood to recommend.

These are just some of the many things you may want to find out: see The Audience Agency's Bounce Forwards COVID-19 Response Hub for more suggestions, or get in touch for further advice and support about how to act on what you find out via workwithus@theaudienceagency.org

If you have suggested additions or amends, do also get in touch at the same address.