

London Museum Development Diversity Matters Programme 2018-2022

London Museum Development's Diversity Matters Programme encourages London's non-national museums to embrace Arts Council England's [Creative Case for Diversity](#) and engage a more diverse range of visitors with the collections they hold, as well as support them with long standing issues about the diversity of their boards and workforce. Over the four years London's non-national museums will be encouraged to make diversity a key issue in relation to the programming, audience development, leadership and workforce of museums. The national agenda focuses on increasing opportunities for people from protected characteristic groups¹ and overcoming the challenges and the barriers to participation and engagement across socio-economic barriers and across geographic location.

As part of the wider programme, London Museum Development asked museums to share their experiences of developing responsive and diverse programmes, exhibitions, collections, audience initiatives, workforce and trustee boards for all its visitors. The following case study is showcased on the website as it addresses one of the four key areas of diversity practice:

- How museums have worked with its diverse visitors to diversify its public programmes, events, exhibitions and collections to ensure it is more responsive to its respective local community
- How museums have reached more diverse audiences and ensured its audience is more representative of its respective local community
- How museums have developed a more diverse board of trustees that is more representative of its respective local community.
- How museums have recruited and retained a diverse workforce which is more representative of its respective local community.

Musical Museum Case Study



Project Title:	The Hounslow Bollywood Dance Project @ the Musical Museum
Timescales:	December 2019-March 2020
Budget:	£1,800 (£1,000 from 2019-2020 Diversity Matters Programme Grant)

¹ Diversity is defined by Arts Council England through protected characteristic groups, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 and the Equality Duty 2011. These protected characteristics are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, and sexual orientation as well as class and socio-economic status.

Overall area of diversity practice covered as part of project:		Yes
	Working with diverse visitors to produce, present and distribute its public programmes, events, exhibitions and collections to ensure it is more responsive to its respective local community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Reaching diverse audiences to ensure its audience is more representative of its respective local community	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Arts Council England's Creative Case for Diversity evidence area covered as part of project:		Yes
	Integrating diversity in the museum's programme	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Engaging a diverse range of people in developing/delivering programmes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Protected characteristic group museum worked with as part of project:		Yes
	Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Race	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
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Photograph of participants

What were the project's aims?

The museum is situated in the highly diverse London Borough of Hounslow with 51% of the population BAME. Audience research conducted at the museum in 2019 showed that 73% of visitors were white. As such the project aimed to:

- Raise the museum’s profile within the large South Asian community
- Engage in broader programming to attract more visitors from this ethnic group
- Seek input into the museum’s programming through consultation and local partnerships.

Who did the museum work with?

After consultation with the Hounslow Seniors Trust (a local partner organisation) and its participants, who have a large percentage of South Asian participants, particularly Indian residents in and around Hounslow, the museum worked with the Trust to offer Bollywood Dance sessions in the Winter and Spring programme for both children and over 50’s. The participants would learn a Bollywood routine, which they would then perform at a museum public programme event to encourage other visitors at the event to learn and participate in.

This was the first time the museum had actively sought to specifically programme events to attract greater ethnic diversity amongst its visitors. The classes were advertised by Hounslow Senior Trust as well promoted in local libraries, Waterman’s Arts Centre, the museum’s mailing list, through an advert in the local paper and via social media. Overall, 32 participants engaged in these dancing sessions. Some of the participants had done previous Bollywood sessions with the Trust, others were complete beginners.

What did the project entail?

Initially 4 classes were planned for the Over 50’s and two sessions for children with the event planned for February 2020. The over 50’s sessions were well attended and very much enjoyed by participants. However, as the sessions progressed participants felt nervous about performing in public and the number who said they’d be able to attend the event dwindled. After a discussion with the participants and Hounslow Senior Trust, it was suggested that the event was postponed and provided participants with 5 additional dancing session to increase their confidence.

The rescheduled event was originally planned for July at the museum’s largest annual outdoor Open Day, however, due to the global Covid-19 pandemic, this has now been postponed until the autumn. In the meantime, a video of some of the participants dancing is being used to promote future events and highlight the sessions that have taken place so far and the on-going sessions to resume in the autumn to get participants ready for the event. Hounslow Seniors Trust have funding to fund a further 15 Bollywood dance classes at the museum in preparation for the event, when it is safe to resume such activities.

The children’s classes planned during the February Half Term, were not as popular and staff plan to work with local schools and other organisations delivering music projects for young people to put on some additional sessions in the autumn when it is again safe to do so.

What did the project achieve?

Outputs included:

Total number of participants worked with:	32
Total number of sessions with participants:	9
Total number of co-curated events for general visitors:	1*
Total number of general visitors who attended the event:	TBC*

Videos created for the museum's website:	1
<p><i>* Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic this event has been rescheduled for the autumn, when it is safe to run events for visitors again. The table will be updated following the event in the autumn.</i></p> <p>Outcomes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the participants were interested in the museum's exhibition after the sessions, and as such have taken a look and brought friends and family to visit the museum independently • The experience was mutually beneficial for both the museum and participants and the museum plans to consult participants once classes are able to resume in the autumn about what the South Asian and specifically Indian community would like to see and attend at the museum going forward. 	

What impact did the project have?
<p><i>On the organisation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result of staff attending London Museum Development's Developing an Inclusive Museum training session, the museum developed its first Equality Action Plan, which the museum will use to inform its future programming and plans to engage broader audiences with the museum's collection • Due to the success of the Hounslow Senior Trust partnership, the museum plans to seek further partnerships with other local organisation to collaborate on future activities • Participants have suggested the museum consider exploring links with the museum's predominately western history of the production of music alongside developments in Indian music, as such the museum will explore this going forward • Inspired by the success of the project, it has given staff the confidence and skills to explore ways of highlighting recordings of Polish composers in the community and setting up discussion groups to inform future programming as Hounslow also has a large Polish community with whom the museum wishes to engage going forward • Following the success of the discussions, the museum is also looking at ways to exhibit a broader range of subjects in collaboration with its community within its exhibition spaces • Lastly, the museum has sought to be more community focussed in recent years, and the need for strong, well-thought out partnerships has been emphasised by this project. As such the museum is seeking to set up a Community Music Festival in August 2021 collaborating with a number of local community groups and seeking a diverse range of music to played and enjoyed at the event. <p><i>On the participants:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase confidence as well as improving their health and wellbeing by participating in weekly dance classes • For some participants this was the first time visiting the museum and became interested in visiting the museum's exhibitions after sessions and have subsequently brought friends and family back to visit the museum independently.

What lessons did the museum learn from the project?
<p>Key lessons staff learnt included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving staff the confidence to have a fresh mind set when it comes to programming and promoting the overarching narrative of the collection to broader audiences

- The importance of developing long-term partnerships with organisations that have established themselves in the community and can reach out to more diverse groups that do not visit the museum
- Undertake research and talk to local community groups about what they want from us and what activities would encourage them to visit the museum
- The importance of reconsidering the price of tickets for local audiences and community groups. The museum currently offers a 50% discount to Hounslow residents, but given the success of the project and the desire to support more participants to visit independently, staff feel the price barrier to entry needs to be re-explored.

What tips does the museum have for other museums undertaking a similar project?

1. Get feedback from your participants from the very first session to inform how future sessions and the project evolves from discussions to ensure the participants feel safe and confident in working with you to deliver the project's outputs (in this project's case the final event)
2. Listen to what your audiences and participants say and adapt to their needs as this creates a more welcoming environment and encourages them to bring along friends and family
3. Use recognised, well respected leaders and tutors to work with and deliver the sessions
4. Engage with new visitors as much as possible, find out what they want and be open and listen to new ideas of engaging them with the museum's collections.

Other photographs



Photograph of participants performing



Photograph of participants performing

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