BEING OF VALUE: INTENTIONALLY FOSTERING & DOCUMENTING THE PUBLIC VALUE IN MUSEUMS

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“In everything museums do, they must remember the cornerstone on which the whole enterprise rests: to make a positive difference in the quality of people’s lives. Museums that do that, matter—they matter a great deal.”

Stephen E. Weil, 2002
Overview

Exploring public value:
- Defining it;
- Frameworks for planning & documenting it;
- Outcomes & indicators that demonstrate public good
Defining Public Value

- Strategic impact *for and with communities*, rather than *institutional* impact;
- Fully connected to fabric & community needs
- When start from institution perspective, result can be what institution *thinks* community needs (healthy, vital museum, content they've defined)!
- Healthy, vital museum is means toward public good, rather than goal itself
Why Now?

Isn’t the good work of museums given?

- Achieving and documenting public value is important because:
  - Need to refocus & return to core values & mission
  - Must concretely demonstrate public value for funding & sustainability over time
  - Elephant in room: museums may not be as relevant perhaps as professionals working within them think they are
Reality is….

- As well-intentioned goals are, some approach from power position & self-preservation
- Work collaboratively for & with citizens to identify content that is valuable, empowering & meets needs of community, rather than deciding what community needs to know
Planning For Public Value

How will *community* be different because museum exists?: Reframe activities thru lens of impact **on community**:

- Who is/are primary audience(s)? Why?
- What specific needs or wants **of audience** are being met? How do you know?
- Have “right” people been involved **from outset**?
- How will audience benefit from activities? How will you know?
- How will *community as whole* benefit from activities? How will you know?
Achieving *Intentional Impact on Community*

- Frame work within fabric of community & institution; buy-in top down to ensure centrality to mission & day-day activities;
- Develop theory of change & Logic Model; foster looking *outward* while developing innovative ideas, values & habits inside
- Situate assessments of progress within day-to-day activities of organization as integral part of planning & development
Assessing Community Impact

- How do you develop activities & build capacity in assessment with organizations for which this is not their expertise?
- Can you develop practical & intuitive tools for assessment, that reframe it as day-to-day activity (not report card at end) that organizations can & even more importantly want to use as tools?
- What are meaningful indicators for community impacts?
Possible Measures

Urban Institute ([www.urban.org](http://www.urban.org))

- The Outcome Indicators Project
  - Track & self-assess community impacts. Four of 14 areas relevant to museum outcomes: Adult Ed. & Family Literacy, Health Risk Reduction, Youth Mentoring & Tutoring

- Arts and Culture Indicators in Community-Building Project
  - Focuses on ways to document how cultural activities, in this case, arts, support the quality of life in a community: cultural vitality & magnetization
Some Longitudinal Data

Impacts of Gender-Focused Programming in Science

- Positive, detailed, & lasting memories of experiences years later
- Influenced future engagement in science (education, careers & hobbies), attitudes towards, perceptions of & understanding of science & scientific habits of mind
- Influenced personal & science identity, social capital, networks, skills & civic engagement
- Perception that experiences filled important developmental needs not met by school