



BOLD FUTURES

The Liminal Space

Bold Futures was a workshop series run in September 2022 to bring together Science and Discovery Centres and Museums to think about shared challenges and opportunities

We wanted to ask:

How can we work together to build a shared, strategic vision for science centres, museums and galleries?

There are 4 themes captured in the workbook on page 2-5 and outlined in the supporting pdf

And specifically:

How can we build capacity to deliver meaningful and responsive work that engages old and new audiences, funders and partners?

How can we consolidate our individual learnings and opportunities to become more resilient in the face of our most pressing challenges?

This document outlines the two workshops that were run, so you might be able to use them with your team to think about organisational and collective change where you are.

There are downloadable materials available to support this thinking and process. These can be printed to take you away from your screens. Visit the-liminal-space.com to see more.

Workshop 1: 3 Hours

CONVENING AND SHARING

Session outline:

Quick fire introductions

Individual reflection - workbook

Short 5 minute break

Group sharing session 1 - break out rooms

20 minute break

Group sharing session 2 - break out rooms

Individual reflection and question setting

Field work briefing

Introductions

Ask everyone to introduce themselves and share something that is inspiring themselves right now.

If you're
using the
work book,
use page
16-17

Quick Fire Reflect and Dream

In your workbook, or on a piece of paper, capture your thoughts coming into these workshops:

I'm thinking about...

I want to use this process to explore/ unpick/
reflect on / develop...

As a result of this process I would like to have...

10 minutes

Comfort break

If you're
using the
work book,
use page
18-19

Thinking about our themes:

Ask people to select one of the areas below, and work in groups to share and reflect upon what it means to them and their work

Evaluation Innovation:

A sector wide shared language, development and enhancement of impact measuring for audiences.

How will this help build better relationships with our audiences?:

We can build our ability to understand what genuine impact we are making in order to develop and adapt. Collective evaluation language and methods might help us share and compare more easily and raise the bar of what we deliver as a sector.

How will this help build resilience?:

A better way to show how we are making impact to funders and partners, making our work more relevant and appealing for resourcing long term. More streamlined and useful evaluation will be less of a tick box exercise, take less resource and become a tool for real time development.

How will this make us better partners for our communities?:

We will be able to have dialogue around successes and opportunities in more meaningful and tangible ways, and they will be able to see we are listening, reflecting and adapting. We will have deeper insight into what our audiences and communities need, and will be better placed to use our resources efficiently.

Listening and Sharing:

Inclusive communication and resource sharing, both internally and cross sector; favouring ground up dissemination and inclusion of all levels of staff, as well as regular dialogue opportunities.

How will this help build better relationships with our audiences?:

We will create more space for insight gathering across our organisations, valuing input from all business areas – we will understand how our organisation is functioning at any time. Regular group reflection will become part of our practice and we will be able to integrate audience insight more easily.

How will this help build resilience?:

Better idea sharing will help stop duplication of conversations, and create a better resourced sector as a whole. Staff retention is likely to improve as people feel valued in decision making, and expertise will not be lost when people move on. We will be able to identify areas to save costs, invest and develop new business practice more effectively.

How will this make us better partners for our communities?:

Our internal communications will make us better colleagues and partners, and we will be able to demonstrate we're really listening and adapt to the people we work with. We will become more critical and able to hold the tensions of our work better, as we involve our communities in our work even more.

Explore and Experiment:

Better mechanisms and opportunities for reflection and critique as well as ability to test and look outside of sectors to learn about innovative engagement, content and practice.

How will this help build better relationships with our audiences?:
We will be able to develop leading experiences and engagement for visitors, and will be able to connect what we offer to wider society and culture to make their time with us more meaningful and relevant.

How will this help build resilience?:
New ideas, methods and practice will be able to be more easily developed, requiring less large scale investment up front. We will be able to 'fail' better and get more insight into what works for our organisation. As a sector, we will be able to share wisdom and learning, and be honest about successes and areas to develop. We will be able to identify new business and revenue opportunities.

How will this make us better partners for our communities?:
We will demonstrate a willingness to learn and collaborate, and create time and resources to build this into our relationships. New ideas can be brought into our organisation from a wider range of expertise and lived experiences, and as a sector we will be able to deeply understand what good and bad community work looks like through our range of experiences and projects.

Power Dynamics and Inclusion:

Sustainable and implementable methods for decolonising, non-extractive community building and equitable practice at every level; internally and externally.

How will this help build better relationships with our audiences?:
Our collections, content and experiences will be relevant, considered and demonstrate values of a fair society. Our staff will be able to walk the talk and create welcoming spaces for visitors, who will want to visit more often and feel that our places are for them.

How will this help build resilience?:
Our organisation will be values-led, and not perpetuate racist, patriarchal, ableist practice and will be able to challenge power structures. We will create workplaces people want to belong to, and our organisations will become examples of and spaces for societal wellbeing – making them more relevant and investable, and able to retain expertise and talent. Our values-led organisations will ensure visitors spend more time and money with us.

How will this make us better partners for our communities?:
We will truly add value to communities, and empower other organisations and individuals through our work. We will give space, time and resources for them to thrive and in turn benefit from equitable and long term relationships that aren't just wed to funding bids or other criteria.

Review your given theme on Miro

Convene: Share aspirations, experiences or reflections around this theme

Inspire: Look at the Miro examples. Think of some responses, solutions or further enquiry into this area - these might already exist from other sectors or orgs, or you might come up with your own

Reflect: Summarise your thoughts on the Miro board - what is a next step to your thinking? What are hurdles that need to be overcome

40 minutes total

Break

If you're
using the
work book,
use page
20-21

Thinking about our themes:

Ask people to select *a different theme*, and mix up the groups to explore a new topic

Review your given theme on Miro

Convene: Share aspirations, experiences or reflections around this theme

Inspire: Look at the Miro examples. Think of some responses, solutions or further enquiry into this area - these might already exist from other sectors or orgs, or you might come up with your own

Reflect: Summarise your thoughts on the Miro board - what is a next step to your thinking? What are hurdles that need to be overcome

40 minutes total

If you're
using the
work book,
use page
22-23

Individual Reflections:

After two conversations, have a think about what sparked your interest the most, and what you'd like to take forward.

What has sparked from your two conversations?

And so...

What is my research question or theme?

You might now

Identify 1-3 prompts to take forward into your next weeks and conversations, these could be keywords, case studies,

Who in my org can help me or will have further insight?

Is there anyone or other resources mentioned that I want to follow up?

10 minutes

Materials for the fieldwork are available to download, and in the workbook on pages 32-41

Part 2: Fieldwork

Ask people to create time between now and the next session to do the following, supported by the material provided.

Make time to connect with two people in your team around what you've been thinking about.

Fill in the pre workshop placemat

Schedule a 15-20 minute cuppa to talk about your theme

Use the placemats as prompts to get their point of view.



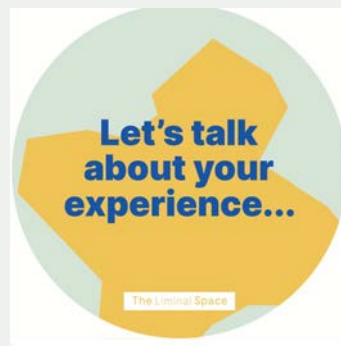
Take 5 minutes to fill this in ahead of a 15 minute cup of tea with someone who you think has valuable insight around your topic or area of enquiry

Conversation topic:

Questions I'd like to ask:

Why my colleague or project partner has valuable insight:

What am I hearing?:



Make time to get 'on the shop floor' or into a mindset of what your visitors experience

Spend 20 minutes reflecting and making notes, tuning into small details that might provide insight to your Bold Future and the themes you've identified

Who or what are you overlooking?

How is your org uniquely placed to become more Bold?

What are some 'boring' or 'run of the mill' things that would make a big difference?

Make some time – half an hour or so – to visit your venue or space during a normal day. It could be sitting down in one particular gallery or zone, or you might like to walk around the whole venue. If you don't have a space, just take a walk and reflect on your last event or exhibition.

Keep your question in mind as you tune into what you notice.....

Some of the following prompts might be useful:

34

How are visitors encountering the space and environment?

How is my team using this space and environment?

35

What excites me about seeing my organisation in action?

What makes this place unique?

If I could wave a magic wand I would.....

The worksheet features several illustrations: a green leaf, a blue shape resembling a pair of sunglasses, a red wavy line, and three pink circles. The pages are connected by a large, hand-drawn orange line.

What have I noticed after making time to connect with my colleagues and audience?

Insight 1:

Insight 2:

Insight 3:

42

43

Spend 10 minutes consolidating your reflection ahead of our next session

Workshop 2: 3 Hours

IMAGINING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

A reminder, we are asking:

How can we build capacity to deliver meaningful and responsive work that engages old and new audiences, funders and partners?

How can we consolidate our individual learnings and opportunities to become more resilient in the face of our most pressing challenges?

Reflection sharing on Miro

Going Deeper - group sharing

Magic 6 Ideas

Break

Ideation: Two Bold Ideas

Sharing back our collective thinking

Personal Reflection

My Bold Future

Downloading our insights and reflections: what were three things you learned or reflected upon in your fieldwork?

There are spaces for notes in the workbook on pages 52-53

Going deeper

Ask people to split into groups to discuss what they heard or tuned into during their Fieldwork

Share back your reflections with the group

Were there any shared learnings?

Did new ideas emerge?

30 minutes

Our challenge areas

Reminding ourselves of areas we want to innovate in

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There is
space in the
workbook to
do this on
pages use
page 54-55

Magic 6

Think of 6 radical ideas that might create the change you want to see

You might think of something for yourself or your org, or for the sector as a whole.

They can be as imaginative, outside or left field as you want

5 minute ideation + group sharing

Break

Building Out Two Bold Ideas

Select two ideas that resonated, one for individual orgs and one for the sector, and expand on them. How would they work?

BIG IDEAS FOR INDIVIDUAL ORGS

There is space in the workbook to do this on pages use page 56-57

What is it?

Why is it needed?

Who is involved?

What are its principles?

What makes it bold?

BIG IDEAS FOR OUR SECTORS

What is it?

Why is it needed?

Who is involved?

What are its principles?

What makes it bold?

30 minutes

The Liminal Space

There is
space in the
workbook to
do this on
pages use
page 60-61

Individual Reflections

What has this process made you think about? What will you take away, and what might you do next?

You can
download the
postcard
design from
the materials
bundle

Ideas for a Bold Future

Fill in your postcard with a summary of what your bold
future might be

A Bold Future is...

The Liminal Space

The Liminal Space

Visit the-liminal-space.com for
more insight and information
about the Bold Futures series