

What is Audience Development?

Key points

Audience Development is a philosophy or approach

It requires you to first have a clear vision for who you are as an artist / creative / arts organisation

It is not simply an add on — placing audience development at the core of what you do is fundamental

It requires a shift from thinking of audiences as merely numbers, ‘bums on seats’, or ticket sales.

Engage your audience to want to be part of your community, reach out with authenticity and a desire to create meaningful experiences, align them with your vision

Understand who your current audience is, who you are excluding and who you want to reach in your potential audience

Start a two way conversation. Because the reality is, you are not your audience, you can't assume you know and understand their experience. How do you do this? You find ways to ask them directly (more on this in Toolkits 02 & 03). Begin to listen to what they want, their arts experiences, their attendance obstacles

Audience development methods are about thinking outside the square, innovating, testing ideas and getting feedback

Be honest with yourself about what's working and what's not working, and adapt your behaviour

Collaborate with others in your ecosystem, and explore unexpected alliances that might bring surprising results

Useful questions

Why do you exist as an artist/organisation?

What is your purpose/mission?

Who are you for and why?

What impact do you want to have, and on who?

Who are you including and who are you excluding from your audiences?

What assumptions do you have about your audiences?

How are you listening to your audience?

How do your audiences perceive you and what you do?

Why do they come/engage with what you do?

How can you seek/embed an audience perspective in your organisation?

How can you prepare everyone in your organisation to listen to the feedback, the good AND the bad?

What are the existing barriers for your current audience, and for new audiences?

Who is in your neighbourhood, and are you engaging with them?

Ehara taku toa i te toa
takitahi, engari he toa takitini
My success is not mine alone,
it is the success of the collective