

Many changes add up

I'm Piotr Bienkowski,

I was commissioned by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation
to develop and direct their Our Museum programme.

The Our Museum programme has been supporting
a number of museums and galleries across the United Kingdom
for a few years to create active partnerships
with their communities so that communities
have a real sense of ownership
and at the heart of effective participatory community engagement
is organisational change.

There isn't one simple solution,
you can't change the way an organisation operates,
thinks, and acts in one simple step.

So, if you want to become a participatory museum or gallery
you have to go through a process of organisational change
and that involves lots of steps across the whole organisation.

Think of it as lots of individual changes
adding up to one big significant shift.

So what are some of the things you might change?

There's governance and leadership,
do the director, the senior management and the trustees
all buy-in to community participation?

Are they vocally championing,
or are they just passively going along with projects
and along the treadmill of delivery?

Have they thought about participatory practice strategically

and have they embedded all of the small changes
into the business model of your museum?
Do staff understand how they play a part?
Is it part of the remit and responsibility of every member of staff
or is it limited to just one small team?
What sort of community partners do you work with?
Do you work with the usual suspects
or have you gone through a strategic process
of mapping who your communities are
and identifying who you should be working with?
Are you really committed to a process of organisational change?
Are you benchmarking yourselves, evaluating your progress
and getting support from outside the organisation
to help you reflect on your practice and progress?
In collaboration with many organisations
and individuals in the field, we have developed resources
on different aspects of change.

On governance and leadership, on staff development,
on engaging with community partners,
on evaluation and the external voice
and on structures and mechanisms.

Obviously, the situation in your own museum or gallery will be unique.

What we hope, is that these resources
will help you and inspire you to explore these issues
either by applying the practical examples to your own setting
or by developing dialogue and discussion
so you can improve participatory community engagement

in your own organisation.