DOCACCESS PLAYLISTS FOR CHANGE

CREATING AN IMPACT STRATEGY

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Welcome to the DocAccess playlists for change – this is the Creating an Impact Strategy learning module.

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This module provides a step by step overview of how to develop an impact strategy for your documentary screening, event or campaign, including:

- Developing a vision
- Identifying the key messages
- Refining your goals
- Clarifying your call to action
- Developing a theory of change

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Developing a strategy for your documentary screening or event isn't for everyone.

You may be planning to host a one-off, powerful documentary screening or event, resulting in a range of responses and outcomes, in which case you may not need to develop an impact strategy.

Just like water dropping into a pond, the impacts will happen organically on their own.

However, if you want to harness the energy generated in the room and create momentum around an action, campaign or call for change, then this module is for you!

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So, where do you begin?

The steps we recommend taking when thinking through a strategy for your screening or event include:

- Understanding your issue area or need
- Creating a vision for your screening or event

- Identifying the key messages you want to convey through the film
- Articulating your goals and selecting your calls to action - or what you will invite your audience members to DO once the screening has finished
- And, in some cases, developing an audience theory of change

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Step one in developing a strategy is making sure you are informed of the issue area you are stepping into and the specific issue or problem you are aiming to address through your documentary screening or event.

Understanding your issue area and who is affected helps you to decide on an appropriate call to action to make a genuine difference.

The outcomes you hope to achieve will be more valuable if they are actually addressing a need. For example, you could encourage all of your audience members to donate umbrellas, but if no one in your community actually NEEDS an umbrella then you aren't going to be contributing to a positive social outcome.

You can learn more about some great tools to support your understanding of your issue area in our Mapping Your Issue Area module.

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Step two of thinking through your strategy involves creating a vision for your screening or event.

Visions provide an important focus for all of your activities and communications, as well as a motivating direction for everyone involved in running and attending your screening or event.

Visions are the most engaging and effective when they are broad and aspirational, future and outcome focussed and communicated through a short, snappy phrase.

Keep in mind that you want to choose a vision that is directly linked to what is possible through your screening or event.

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Here are some example vision statements to give you a deeper understanding of the power of a well articulated statement.

“Drive support for environmental and land defenders, and strengthen their efforts to protect natural environments.”

“Change perceptions about women in agriculture, and inspire a new generation of women to help shape the future of Australia's sustainable food production.”

“Shift the way the community understands the experiences of First Nations Peoples, particularly people connected to the Stolen Generation story.”

“Highlight the devastating crisis of homelessness facing older women in Australia today, and accelerate local action towards safe and affordable housing for women.”

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Because you are developing a strategy for a documentary screening, your strategy needs to link with and build on the themes and key messages in the film.

When thinking through the key messages, ask yourself

- What do you think your audience will feel or take away from watching the film? What will resonate? What will shock or surprise? What will move the people in the room?

- If you have any partners or key stakeholders, what will be important from their perspective in terms of messages in the film? What key information does the film impart and how does this align with your partner or stakeholder aims?

Documentaries often highlight many messages and so, once you have a list of potential messages from the film, you need to consider which of those messages best align with your vision and what you are trying to achieve.

Select up to 3 key messages for your screening or event which will form the foundation of the rest of your strategy.

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Next, you can identify your screening goals which should logically connect with and extend from the key messages you have chosen from the documentary.

- You might want to ask yourself, what does the documentary speak to and what can it help to change?

- How will the audience be feeling after the screening and what might they be inclined to do to contribute to change?

- What can you do yourself through the screening, and where might you need partners to support you to achieve your aims?

When developing your goals it is again important to ensure that your aims are possible through the screening of a documentary film.

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There are a range of goals you might consider for your screening, which can be grouped under these four headings.

You may wish to increase the visibility of a social issue, specific experiences, initiatives or solutions.

You may hope to increase audience awareness, empathy and understanding of a particular topic or experience.

You may want to motivate audiences to support communities, key organisations or initiatives combatting the topic of interest.

Finally, you may want to mobilise audiences to promote education and advocacy campaigns and drive support for solutions.

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Once you have articulated your screening goals, you can identify your supporting calls to action.

This is the concrete action that you can provide when the screening finishes and your audience members want to know, 'what can I do'?

Through providing a call to action, you are creating a pathway for your audiences to support the achievement of your screening goals.

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The breadth of the calls to action to consider is vast.

For example, if you are building a community around your own initiative you could invite your audience to sign up to your campaign for change.

If you are wanting to build support for organisations or community led initiatives you may call on your audience to donate to a cause or volunteer.

If you are wanting to build public pressure in support of policy or systems change, you could invite your audience members to sign a petition, contact their local decision maker or donate to a campaign for change.

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Once you are clear on your goals, you can start to consider what you can achieve yourself, where it would be beneficial to partner to create genuine action, and who else aligns closely with your vision and goals who may be interested in collaborating.

See our Partnering for Impact module to learn more.

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The final piece of your screening strategy is to connect all the dots by creating an audience theory of change.

This is basically a diagram that outlines how you anticipate your audiences may respond to and then act following the screening of the film.

The benefit in drawing this out is to make sure there is a logical link between your screening and event and the actions and change you are hoping to achieve as a result of your film.

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In Summary:

- Developing an impact strategy will help you create momentum around a social issue through a clear vision, messages and goals.

- It is vital you understand the issue area you are aiming to support, ensuring your outcomes are meeting actual social needs.

- Your vision, key messages and goals should be directly linked to the documentary you are screening.

- Develop specific calls to action that drive audiences towards these goals and follow your theory of change.