DOCACCESS PLAYLISTS FOR CHANGE

UNDERSTANDING IMPACT

Slide 1:

Welcome to the DocAccess playlists for change – this is the 'Understanding Impact' Module!

Slide 2:

This video will cover:

- What do we mean by impact?
- Why plan your impact and develop an impact strategy?
- What is an impact strategy?
- And we will explore case study examples of documentary impacts.

Slide 3:

Impact has become a potentially over-used buzz word referring to a raft of things, so what do WE mean when we use the term impact?

Essentially we are talking about the effect of your screening or event. Has your event had any influence? Has anything changed? Were any outcomes achieved?

Is anyone better off?

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Documentaries can be an immensely powerful tool for sparking positive social change. There are many possible outcomes that can be achieved as a result of one or many screenings or events. Therefore, considering the impact you want to achieve is an important consideration.

Through their unique capacity to join social issues and storytelling, documentaries go beyond simply entertaining to improving understanding and educating.

They presenting complex information in a human, digestible, engaging fashion which means you can engage audiences with current or pressing social issues in a way that facts and stats can't.

Screenings and events of documentaries connect and convene audiences. They facilitate important conversations and turn crowds into communities.

Together, documentary films and their screenings have the potential to raise awareness amongst large or target audiences, they can increase empathy and understanding by providing new and emotive insights, they can empower individuals and communities and inspire people to act.

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Not everyone will want to or need to develop an impact strategy, but for those looking to use the documentary as a tool for change it is worth spending some time thinking about how you will use the opportunity created by your screening or event to engage your audience in some form of action.

Few things happen by accident when it comes to mobilising audiences towards action, so thinking through a strategy will help provide a planned framework and pathway to use the documentary as a tool for change.

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The term impact strategy might sound somewhat intimidating, but it is actually quite a simple plan when you boil it down.

A strategy involves thinking through how the key messages you are hoping to convey at your screening or event, and the action you plan to invite your audience to take following the event, will together help you reach your change objectives or ideal event or screening outcomes.

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Developing an impact strategy is not only useful for the impact you hope to achieve, but also your fundraising, partnership discussions, and communications for your screening or event.

A basic strategy for a screening or event should include a vision for what you are hoping to achieve, the key messages you are hoping to impart through screening the documentary film and your facilitated discussion (if you are having one), your key activities and the call to action you would like to share with your audience after they have felt moved by the documentary film, and the goals or outcomes you are hoping to achieve as a result.

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When thinking through the outcomes you are hoping to achieve, keep in mind that change can happen at one or more levels depending on your plan.

For example, you may want to focus on influencing your audience by increasing awareness or knowledge, improving empathy or attitudes, facilitating networking and connections or encouraging audience members to share, seek information, donate, volunteer, advocate or change their behaviour in some way following the screening or event.

You could also have a community lens on, with an interest in increasing local or community based awareness and dialogue and collective knowledge, improve community connections, spur community action or support for local initiatives.

If you are hosting screenings for students, whether primary, secondary or tertiary, you may be seeking educational outcomes.

Or perhaps you are interested in garnering support for your or another organisation, to fundraise, progress organisational goals or support new or improved initiatives. Documentaries are also powerful in encouraging people to volunteer or engage, contribute to professional development or motivate staff members in their work.

Finally, you may be interested in creating a public splash to get an issue on the local agenda and influence the public discourse, or to grow and accelerate public pressure to demand policy, legislative or systems change.

This all sounds quite hypothetical, so let's look at a few examples of how documentary films have been used at screenings or events in real life.

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Backtrack Boys

Synopsis:

A group of troubled boys are on a perilous course towards jail until they meet up with the free-wheeling jackaroo, Bernie Shakeshaft, and hit the road with his legendary dog jumping team. This observational documentary follows boys in a youth program BackTrack that Bernie runs from a shed on the outskirts of Armidale, Australia.

Key messages:

- It's never too late to change
- Troubled young people need an alternative to juvenile detention centres
- We need a different approach to working with young people at risk of social exclusion, particularly in rural and regional areas

Impact Goals:

- Provide young people with a positive narrative about themselves
- Change the conversation in communities about how they approach youth issues
- Support advocacy organisations working in the youth space
- Shine a light on BackTrack and other youth programs to ensure they continue to receive funding and support

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The documentary was screened widely by a range of organisations with the aim to:

- Support Backtrack Youth Works
- Initiate community-wide conversations
- Educate professionals
- Drive new practice approaches and grassroots programs in local areas
- Elevate visibility of advocacy campaigns

As you can see here, depending on the screening host and their objectives the documentary contributed to change at a variety of levels.

So, what was actually achieved?

- Organisational fundraising, community support and profile
- Increased community awareness and empathy for vulnerable and at-risk youth and their experiences
- Educational and professional development outcomes
- Youth validation, hope and inspiration
- New community conversations and initiatives
- Support for the #RaisetheAge Campaign

Slide 11:

Visible Farmer

Synopsis:

Visible Farmer discovers the untold stories of the gutsy women behind our food and fibre, and the vital, innovative role they play. Women play a key role in the global rural workforce. They "make up half of the agricultural workforce and represent a large part of our next generation of workers, managers, researchers and decision makers." However until 1994 Australian women could not legally claim to be 'farmers', instead the law defined them as domestics, helpmates and farmers' wives.

This unique short-film web-series has set out to change perceptions of who our farmers are. At its heart Visible Farmer is about education, gender equality and strong, forward-looking stories from Australian farming communities.

Impact Goals:

- Change perceptions of women and inspire a new generation of young women and girls to consider agriculture as a valued career path.
- Start conversations about the gender gap in agriculture in order to help the industry be more inclusive.
- Empower women to find their voice and foster strong connections.
- Support Advocacy - our films are a powerful resource tool to support our partners' education and advocacy goals.

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Screenings and partnerships around Visible Farmer focused primarily on two pressing issues: gender equality and food security

As you can see on the slide, a raft of incredible partners helped promote the series through providing public endorsements

The outcomes of documentary views, screenings and events included:

- Highlighted inspiring female role models in Australian agriculture
- Increased awareness that women play a vital role in agriculture
- Provided educational value regarding our broader agricultural industry and regional Australia

- Strengthened perceptions that Australia needs to improve gender equality in farming and agriculture
- Empowered female farmers and validated their role in Australian agriculture.

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In summary, throughout this module - we have looked the meaning of impact in the context of documentaries, ensuring we focus on the outcomes of our screenings and events.

We've walked through the importance of developing an impact strategy – ensuring we shape screenings and events that can deliver outcomes based on key objectives.

And we looked through two case studies – that allowed us to see, real-world scenarios of how documentaries have leveraged their impact strategies and partnerships to achieve desired impact outcomes.