Australian Government
Australia Council for the Arts
ARTS VICTORIA
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# AUDIENCE RESEARCH

## MADE EASY

# FOREWORD

*Audience Research Made Easy* was written to provide organisations with guidance and advice on how to conduct effective audience research and better understand audiences.

Access to reliable information can help make the most of limited budgets. From informal observation to focus groups and questionnaires, this book explores creative ways to manage this essential marketing activity.

This area has consistently been nominated by Arts organisations as a priority for support. In response, Arts Victoria initiated a pilot investigation to look at the research needs of seven small-to-medium sized organisations and produce an easy to follow guide. The resulting report and sample questionnaire formed the basis for the current publication.

By focusing on the needs of relatively small companies, this practical guide demonstrates how arts organisations of all sizes can carry out cost-effective audience research.

*Audience Research Made Easy* will supply you with the tools and building blocks you need to create your own research projects and to build links and bridges to your audiences.


## Acknowledgement

*Audience Research Made Easy* was initiated by Arts Victoria, the Government body charged with advising on and implementing arts policy, developing the arts and cultural industries across Victoria and ensuring access to all Victorians. The publication consists of three modules, written by Sharron Dickman, and based on the valuable input of Woolcott Research and marketing consultant Judith James.

*Audience Research Made Easy* is a joint initiative of Arts Victoria, through its Audience Development and Marketing Unit and the Australia Council, the Australian Government's arts funding and advisory body, through its Audience and Market Development Division.





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# ABOUT THE MODULES

This toolkit is divided into three modules.

## Module A

**Absolute Beginners' Guide to Audience Research is for individuals and organisations with little or no prior experience in conducting audience research.**

This module outlines eight practical steps to assist you to understand the importance of audience research, the way it can be used in your organisation and the types of research you can do. It explains how to analyse research data, write reports and take action on the results, and includes a number of examples of actual research projects undertaken by small and medium performing arts organisations.

The steps are:

Step 1 — Understanding the importance of audience research

Step 2 — Defining your research problem

Step 3 — Choosing the right kind of research for your project

Step 4 — Basic quantitative research

Step 5 — Basic qualitative research

Step 6 — Analysing your information

Step 7 — Writing your report

Step 8 — Making the most of your research

When you have completed this module you will have a basic understanding of audience research and how to use it to benefit your organisation.

## Module B

**Basics of Audience Research is for those who have successfully worked their way through Module A or for individuals or organisations who have some familiarity or experience with audience research. The 'Audit of Market Intelligence' in Section 1 of Module B will help you decide how to use the module.**

While Module B is designed to familiarise you with secondary, qualitative and quantitative research, the quantitative information relates directly to the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire in Module C.

Module B includes:

Section 1 – Introduction

Section 2 – Secondary research

Section 3 – Qualitative research

Section 4 – Quantitative research

Section 5 – Analysing and interpreting results

Section 6 – Presenting and implementing your results

## Module C

**Conducting your own audience research: using the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire.**

Module C includes:

- a brief introduction
- a printed sample of the questionnaire
- guidelines for entering data and generating results

If you are a newcomer to audience research, completing the three modules will help you move from novice to research-ready manager. If you have some experience in audience research, the modules will provide a useful tool for improving your data collection.

# MODULE A

## AUDIENCE RESEARCH MADE EASY

# MODULE A
# ABSOLUTE BEGINNERS' GUIDE TO AUDIENCE RESEARCH

## STEP 1
## Understanding the importance of audience research

### What is audience research?

Audience research is the systematic collection and analysis of useful information about an organisation to facilitate practical decision-making. It is also known as 'market research'.

There are four basic types of audience research:

**Descriptive research** – describes your audience and their characteristics; for example, who are your current audiences, where do they live, how old are they?

**Analytical research** – seeks to understand 'how' and 'why'. What motivates audiences? For example, why did they attend the first play of the season, but none of the others?

**Predictive research** – considers 'what if' situations; for example, what will happen if we change venues, or the name of our company?

**Tracking research** – long-term research that monitors changes taking place over time; for example, how has the pattern for subscription season ticket sales changed over the past three years?

We use audience research to:

- discover information about our audiences: who they are, their likes and dislikes and their attendance patterns
- gather information about other arts and entertainment organisations, their levels of success and the potential cross-over between their audiences and our own.

Audience research helps us:

- manage organisations more effectively
- obtain information to plan budgets, fundraising and promotions
- prioritise spending on facilities and services
- understand current audiences and identify potential new audiences
- analyse past behaviour or predict future behaviour.

## Using Audience Research

### EXAMPLE — Audience feedback, South Australia

South Australia is home to a number of small and medium performing arts organisations. One organisation that focuses on multicultural audiences has identified regular audience research as an essential component of their activities. It has a direct influence on the programs they develop and the way they promote their productions. The organisation uses a number of formal and informal research techniques, including forums, focus groups, workshops, e-newsletters, online bulletin boards and online discussions.

### EXAMPLE — Youth audiences, Tasmania

In 1999-2000, two Tasmanian arts organisations initiated the Tasmanian Youth Audience Development Strategy, which involved detailed research of live performance attendance by 15–26 year olds. The results of the research indicated that joint audience development projects would be beneficial, especially if they included 'socialisation' offerings. A new concept, LIVE, was developed by six participating arts organisations around the theme *You can't beat a LIVE performance*. It included a website, membership discounts and the establishment of the LIVE lounge for pre and post performance social activities, including live music and other entertainment.

### We are just a small organisation. Audience research sounds complicated and expensive.

Any organisation can conduct effective audience research. While it would be nice to have a huge budget to employ professional consultants to prepare impressive reports, there are many practical things that small organisations can do to provide useful information for decision-making.

It takes time to think about audience research, analyse your situation and determine what types of research you can afford to do, bearing in mind the time available, the skills that you, your staff or volunteers have, and your budget.

There are many types of research to consider, either alone or in partnership with others. Useful research may be as simple as having the person who sells tickets ask everyone how they heard about a performance, or where they live; or you may conduct surveys, run discussion groups, or simply watch and keep track of what your audiences do. For example, do they arrive early, walk around the foyer, make food and beverage purchases, or arrive just in time to be seated? These simple types of audience research can assist you in future planning and don't require a lot of time or money.

### EXAMPLE — Using database information, regional centre

The Performing Arts Centre of a major regional centre makes good use of basic data it collects from ticket buyers. When bookings are made, the booking system adds names, addresses (including postcodes), phone numbers, and how tickets were purchased (phone, walk in, email, mailing list) to a master file. In six-monthly intervals, IT staff analyse the data and prepare a map that shows the audience spread for each program.

This information has been very useful for the Performing Arts Centre's marketing activities. For example, postcode analysis showed that the catchment for country and western music programs was across the region, while the Morning Melodies programs attracted more patrons from the provincial centre itself. These findings influenced the advertising and marketing programs for these events.

While your organisation can conduct its own audience research, it is also useful to look at work that has been done by other organisations, particularly the Australia Council and Arts Victoria. Spending some time on the Internet (for example, <www.fuel4arts.com>), or talking to other organisations about research they have conducted or reports they have read, can be rewarding.

### EXAMPLE — Small to Medium Performing Arts Company Research, Arts Victoria

In 2002 Arts Victoria commissioned Woolcott Research to survey the audiences of seven small to medium performing arts companies/venues in Melbourne.

They collected information from more than 750 people on:

- their interest in, and attendance at, performing arts activities
- sources of awareness and reasons for attendance
- satisfaction with venues (comfort, booking systems, suitability to performance)
- demographics (age, gender, occupation, income, area of residence, etc.)

The findings from the study were consistent with other studies of similar audience groups.

Arts Victoria published and distributed a Fact Sheet that enables small to medium performing arts organisations to compare their own data, or use the information as a benchmark for further research.

For a copy of the Fact Sheet, visit the Arts Victoria website <www.arts.vic.gov.au> or <www.fuel4arts.com>.

### So, what's the bottom line? Why do I need audience research?

Effective audience research can help you to:

- **Identify opportunities** – for example, how to attract a specific target audience (such as school groups or tourists) or develop membership or volunteer programs.
- **Overcome obstacles** – for example, misconceptions about your organisation, performance times, difficulties booking tickets, lack of knowledge about a performance, venue or location.
- **Improve facilities** – feedback from audiences and staff can help you make decisions that will improve facilities.
- **Improve profitability** – audience research can help you plan seasons and increase the effectiveness of advertising and promotions.
- **Improve efficiency** – audience research can help to identify periods of peak demand and improve staff and volunteer scheduling.
- **Understand your audiences** – the more you know about them, the more you can meet their needs and turn them into regular attenders or subscribers. Who are they? How old are they? Where do they live? What is their occupation? How much do they earn? What other things do they like to do?
- **Improve audience numbers** – audience research can help increase audience numbers by helping to identify potential partnership and cross-promotion opportunities.
- **Provide information to staff, government bodies or boards** – audience research can be a useful, impartial way of presenting information to staff, funding authorities or boards of management about services, facilities or future plans.
- **Validate spending or seek funding** – audience research results can assist you when seeking approval for spending on capital works, advertising or promotions, or for additional staff. Research can effectively support applications for funding and sponsorship.

## STEP 2
## Defining your research problem

### How do I start?

Effective audience research is focused and practical. It does not involve collecting information 'just for information's sake'— or collecting huge amounts across many topics.

The most useful place to start is to identify the key challenges or problems that are facing your company right now. This is called *defining the research problem*.

This does not mean deciding what results are required, but rather, being clear about the reason for undertaking the research and the way in which you will use the results.

The type of research you do depends on the type of problems your organisation is facing. Generally, we use audience research to help us make better decisions, review past activities, understand past mistakes and identify missed opportunities.

### EXAMPLE — Making effective use of research: Red Stitch Theatre Company and The Store Room, Melbourne

Red Stitch Theatre Company and The Store Room conducted audience research to evaluate the effectiveness of a joint subscription season they introduced in 2004. Each organisation conducted separate audience research as part of the project. Research covered the number of people who took up the joint subscription offer, the number of performances they attended, their level of satisfaction with the offer and intention to subscribe again.

As a result of the research, the organisations decided to continue some joint promotions and to promote each other's seasons in their respective brochures. However they decided to sell their subscriptions separately.

There are three elements to defining the research problem:

1. Defining the **marketing** problem – identifying the marketing issue the organisation faces; for example, a downturn in attendances leading to declining revenue or an increase in late bookings leading to advance planning difficulties.
2. Defining the **research** question – restating the marketing problem in research terms. Why are audience numbers declining and existing audiences booking later and later?
3. Developing the **research proposition** – deciding what type of research to do, and how it will provide an answer to the marketing problem.

## Defining the marketing problem and the research question

Defining the marketing problem is an important step because we need to fully understand the problem. It is generally a good idea to spend quite a bit of time on this and to discuss it with others.

For example, the underlying reason for declining ticket sales might be the company's policy of giving out large quantities of complimentary tickets. While this is effective in attracting new audiences, potential attenders may have developed a 'let's wait and see if we get free tickets before we pay for any' attitude that has resulted in lower sales and later bookings.

On the other hand, the problem could be that the organisation has changed its repertoire and existing audiences are confused about the programs so they don't go, or wait until they have heard good reports from others before booking.

Consider all the things that may have changed and everything that could be having an impact. For an organisation looking at attendances this could include:

### Logistics

- performance times and season
- venue comfort and accessibility
- ease of buying tickets
- ticket price

### Promotion and reputation

- choice of advertising media
- quality, content and frequency of editorial coverage
- language and imagery used in promotions
- effectiveness of promotions in reaching target audience
- company reputation
- word of mouth

### Product

- subject matter
- performance quality or style
- performers and creative team

### Past experience

- lack of satisfaction with the company or with similar kinds of performances in the past

### External factors

- lack of time
- family commitments
- other priorities

**EXAMPLE — Identifying the marketing problem and the research question: Chunky Move, Melbourne**

The marketing problem:

Chunky Move, a contemporary dance group, wanted to book more performances in regional and country areas. They believed many young people in non-metropolitan areas might enjoy contemporary dance if only they knew about it.

The research question:

Chunky Move identified two audience research questions:

1. Why were some regional performing arts centres reluctant to book contemporary dance programs into their venues?
2. Would young people in regional centres go to contemporary dance performances if they were offered? This question was divided into two parts:

a. What types of activities do they participate in now?
b. Would they book tickets for contemporary dance?

Once Chunky Move had defined the marketing problem and the research problem, it was possible to design and implement a research program. The program included telephone surveys of performing arts centre managers and focus groups of young people in key regional centres.

An important point about research is that you must be able to use results to make decisions and changes. You should therefore restrict the things you decide to research (called the variables) by eliminating those you cannot change.

For example, discard questions about venue if your organisation is committed to perform in only one location, or skip questions about performance times if your schedule is locked in and cannot be changed.

There is also no point in undertaking research if the time and cost involved are greater that the benefits that might come from the project. For example, a suggestion is made to offer a ten percent seniors' discount during Seniors Week. You could undertake audience research to measure older people's interest, recruit interviewers and conduct the surveys at a number of local shopping centres, then analyse the results, and prepare the report. But it might be easier — and cheaper — to trial the discount during Seniors Week and monitor the results.

### Developing the research proposition

The final stage of organising your audience research is determining the type of research required to obtain the desired information . There are many types of research options, so the more clearly you define the problem, the easier it is to select the most effective research format.

The steps in developing the research proposition are:

1. Identify the problem.
2. Identify the potential causes of the problem.
3. Consider alternative actions that could solve the problem.
4. Identify existing information that can help solve the problem.
5. Identify what additional information you need to gather.
6. Consider any issues or constraints that impact on what you can and can't do or can and can't change.
7. Decide how you will use the research results to solve the problem.

### EXAMPLE — Developing the research proposition: Bendigo Heritage and Arts Group, Victoria

1. Identify the problem.

   The Bendigo Heritage and Arts Group initiated an audience development project to increase visitation to Bendigo's heritage, arts and cultural attractions by people from the surrounding Central Victorian region.

2. Identify the potential causes of the problem.

   Previous research had shown high levels of awareness of facilities that didn't necessarily translate into visitation. While surrounding communities saw Bendigo as a key service centre, they did not make full use of the cultural facilities available.

3. Consider alternative actions that could solve the problem.

   A range of options was considered, including advertising campaigns, free tickets, various options for 'sampling' arts products, and incentive programs of various types. The final decision was to develop an incentive 'invitation', which entitled people to discounts and free admissions but required them to complete a basic questionnaire. Those who took up the offer were later sent a more detailed survey.

4. Identify existing information that can help solve the problem.

   Many of Bendigo's heritage, arts and cultural attractions had collected information about their audiences, and the special 'invitation' offers were based on this knowledge. The group used existing electoral roles to obtain names and addresses for a mailout to more than 20,000 regional residents.

5. Identify what additional information you need to gather.

   The survey attached to the 'invitation' gathered information on respondents' frequency of visitation to Bendigo, when and why they visited, and whether or not they had attended any of the attractions previously. Information was also gathered on the number of 'invitations' redeemed and the venues visited. The supplementary questionnaire surveyed satisfaction with the venue and intention to revisit.

6. Consider any issues or constraints that impact on what you can and can't do or change.

   Not only did the project itself raise public awareness of Bendigo's cultural attractions, the information gathered provided insights on public attitudes and reactions to the participating properties. For example, one outcome was an indication that price, rather than distance, was a key barrier to attendance.

7. Decide how you will use the research results to solve the problem.

   The results indicated that some communities had higher levels of interest and attendance than others. Since then, advertising campaigns and other programs have targeted these specific areas; others programs have been aimed at raising awareness across the region in general.

Once you have defined the marketing problem and the research problem, you are ready to choose the most appropriate research methods for your project.

## STEP 3
## Choosing the right kind of research for your project

### Two basic types of research
There are two types of research – informal and formal.

### Informal research
At its most informal, this type of research involves members of your organisation chatting with members of the audience or the general public about the organisation and its activities. They may ask people for a moment of their time, perhaps before or after a performance or when they are buying tickets, to find out why they chose a particular performance, what they liked or disliked about it, their expectations beforehand and so forth.

It sounds simple, and it is. The results can be worthwhile, as long as you really take the time to listen objectively to what patrons say.

You might also do simple 'point-of-sale' research when people buy tickets. Keep a checklist and ask simple questions, such as how the person heard about the performance, their postcode, or whether this is the first time they have attended a performance. Keeping track of the answers on an ongoing basis can provide you with useful information.

As one marketing expert commented, this kind of information collection is like lighting a candle: it provides a continuous stream of marketing information to help you find the way. Sometimes, however, you need to organise a formal research project, which is more like a flashbulb illuminating a single specific marketing problem.

### Formal research
The two major types of formal research are called primary and secondary research.

### Secondary research
Secondary research is research that has already been collected, either by your own organisation or others. This could include research studies undertaken by The Australia Council, State arts organisations and associations (such as the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association).

Secondary research also includes information your organisation already collects that can be used for audience research; for example, existing records of the numbers of people attending performances, the number of advance tickets sold, or the number of repeat subscribers.

There may be both internal and external sources of secondary information available to you.

Conduct a review of the records your organisation holds. Often there is useful data ready and waiting to be used. For example, box office sales records may give you some of the following information:

| Existing information | What it tells you |
|---|---|
| Advance ticket sales | – the best time to advertise<br>– when it is time to 'panic' |
| Sales by price category (for example, concession, student, full etc.) | – who your customers are<br>– when your customer mix changes |
| Addresses of subscribers | – where your audience lives (which can help you decide how to spend your advertising dollars)<br>– where untapped audiences live |

There is a lot of research conducted by other organisations that is publicly available. Secondary research is almost always cheaper to obtain and often more comprehensive than an arts organisation could afford to undertake on its own.

Useful secondary data can come from sources like the Australian Bureau of Statistics <www.abs.gov.au>, which collects general information through the census, as well as specific studies on such things as the number of people employed in the arts and the patterns of household spending on arts and entertainment activities.

Local councils have information on the age and ethnicity of people living in the community and many have conducted research on such things as leisure activities, interests and attitudes of young people, and the needs of older residents.

Search the Internet, especially arts-related websites such as <fuel4arts.com>, or contact local council arts officers, the research department at your State arts authority or the Australia Council.

International research can be of interest when considering such issues as expanding markets, revising ticket prices, appealing to particular markets (such as young people) or considering trends in taste and fashion.

There is a lot of information available, but you need to determine its relevance to your organisation. This will depend on the kinds of organisations involved in the research, the questions asked, how and when they were asked, and the size and type of people included in the research. Check the 'methodology' section of a report, as this usually contains this basic information.

For example, there may be a very interesting report on the Internet about how a well-known choral group in New York expanded their market. However, if your community choral society operates in a small regional centre, you will need to carefully analyse how comparable the two groups are and draw conclusions about the usefulness of the research.

On the other hand, a major study done in the UK on motivating teenagers to attend classical music performances may contain information and suggestions that are relevant for classical music companies in Australia.

**EXAMPLE — secondary research identifying useful international information**
The Vancouver Opera Company conducted audience research into potential audience development opportunities within the Chinese, Japanese, German and Italian communities. The results of the research indicated that German and Italian audiences, because they were already familiar with European music, would require relatively straightforward marketing efforts. For the Chinese audiences, a slightly different approach was required and implemented. First, the company established relationships with Chinese community groups. Research within these communities identified Madame Butterfly and Carmen as particular favourites. Promotions and incentives to attend these operas achieved positive results.

This approach has been studied by Australian organisations to apply to their own multicultural communities.

### Primary research — conducting your own research

Primary research is original research carried out to answer a specific, unique research question.

Primary research takes time and money and should be undertaken only after you have looked at all the relevant and accessible secondary research.

There are two types of primary research — quantitative and qualitative.

- **Quantitative** – think of this as ‘who’ and ‘what’ research. You need to collect a lot of data to get useful information, so you need a ‘quantity’ of responses.

  Quantitative research counts the number of people who behave in certain ways or hold certain attitudes. Often, quantitative research is conducted using questionnaires or surveys. It is perhaps the easiest research method for small to medium performing arts companies to conduct without specialist help. In Module C (the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire) we look at quantitative research in more detail and give you a research tool that allows you to do this type of research independently.

- **Qualitative** – think of this as ‘why’ research. You need to spend time with each person understanding ‘how’ and ‘why’ they do things or make decisions. It is the ‘quality’ of each interview that is important.

  Qualitative research explores how people think or behave, and why. Usually, information is obtained through discussion, often in in-depth interviews or focus groups. Because the discussion depends on the interaction between a leader and the group, it is advisable to use experienced and well-briefed researchers. In Module B we look at qualitative research in more detail.

## STEP 4
## Basic quantitative research

### What is quantitative research?

Quantitative research (think of it as 'quantity' or 'numbers') counts the number of people who do things and what they do. Often, quantitative research is conducted using questionnaires.

The third component of this toolkit includes a DIY Audience Research Questionnaire that has been especially designed for performing arts organisations. In this section we will review the principles of quantitative research and the issues you need to consider before starting a quantitative research project.

Quantitative research is the easiest form of research for small to medium sized performing arts companies.

### Where do we start? Who? How? When? Where?

The who, how, when and where of your research project is governed by:

- your research objectives
- access to your target audience
- resources (the time and money you have available for the project)
- restrictions in terms of privacy, legal and ethical constraints

Let's review the legal issues first. The Federal Government's Privacy Legislation is very clear about your obligations to treat the information you gather with care. See the Office of the Privacy Commissioner's website <www.privacy.gov.au> for information sheets on the rules and regulations governing privacy in Australia. Another good source of basic information about privacy and research is the Roy Morgan Research site (<www.roymorgan.com/company/privacy-statement.cfm>.

Basically, if you are collecting names, addresses or other information from people, you must:

- state how their details will be used
- ask if they would or would not like to receive information from you in the future
- make personal questions such as income, age and occupation optional
- reassure them that their contact details and answers will not be forwarded to any third party.

This can be done by including a disclaimer at the end of a survey or, if you are conducting telephone surveys, giving a brief assurance at the beginning of the conversation, such as:

*Please be assured that the information and opinions you provide will be kept confidential, and will only be used for research purposes. While we would prefer that you answer all questions, if there is anything you would prefer not to answer, that's fine. Just let me know.*

### Who will you survey?

This will depend on your research objectives. You may want to conduct research with your existing audiences (or segments of that audience); or you may want to survey past audience members (for example, lapsed attenders or non-attenders). You might want to research new or potential audiences, or you could be interested in competitors or other leisure or recreational markets, such as pubs and clubs or festivals.

Once you have identified the group you want to research, you need to locate them and develop a survey they will be willing to answer. It is relatively easy to research current audiences, however if you are interested in researching non-attenders, you could talk to other relevant arts companies or venues about joint research.

A *sample* is the total number of people who complete the questionnaire or interview. There are three types of samples:

**Random sample** – everyone has an equal chance of being involved; for example, every third subscriber on the database.

**Convenience sample** – selecting a number of people where the target audience gathers; for example, 50 interviews with people in the foyer of the theatre before a performance. This is the most commonly used technique. The reliability is increased if surveys are conducted over a range of performances – weekdays, weekends or matinees.

**Quota sample** – where the interviewer is given a quota of different types of people by such characteristics as age, gender, location etc. The proportions are determined by reference to a census or other information sources. A good example is if you want to find the opinions of a statewide population, and one quarter live regionally, then one quarter of your sample should come from the regions.

### How many people do I need to interview?

For most purposes, a sample size of between 100 and 200 is sufficient. However, if you want to examine sub-categories within the sample – such as those aged under 30, or people from regional centres – analysis of anything less than 50 responses in that sub-category should be treated with caution. It may be better to conduct a quota sample for that sub-category (for example, 50 people under the age of 30 years).

Always keep in mind the number of *completed* surveys you require and ensure you initiate enough to achieve that target. Use a 25 percent response rate as your rule of thumb – if you want 100 completed surveys, plan to contact at least 400 people (more for some types of surveys; see the chart below).

Offering an incentive (free tickets, merchandise etc.) will often increase the response rate, although it adds to your workload. It also removes the anonymity of the survey as you need to collect names and details for the prize to be awarded.

### How do you conduct a survey?

The following chart documents different methods of collecting data.

### Data collection methods

| Method | Who | Where and when | Resources Required | Considerations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Telephone | Current, lapsed, potential and non-attenders | At home (do not call people at work). Call at different times of the day to get a cross-section of respondents | – Up-to-date, accurate contact list<br>– Access to telephones and quiet work area<br>– Questionnaire and computer to input data, or space to write in answers to input into computer later<br>– Introduction script<br>– Interviewers | – Allow six names for one completed interview (600 names to get 100 completed surveys)<br>– Can be done quickly, results available quickly<br>– Some people regard telephone surveys as an intrusion |
| Face-to-face intercept (interviewing at theatre/onsite) | Current, potential and non-attenders (outside other venues) | At the entrance or exit of venues, in the foyer, on the street, at public transport hubs | – Questionnaire<br>– Interviewers<br>– Identification<br>– Permission to use venues and locations other than your own | – People may be in a hurry, limited time, short questionnaires<br>– Need trained interviewers<br>– Data needs to be transferred to computer later<br>– Care needed to ensure you obtain a representative sample |
| Face-to-face appointment | Current, potential and non-attenders | At agreed meeting place, for example, at their home, at the venue | – Questionnaire<br>– Interviewers with identification and transport if travelling to respondents<br>– Interview space, services and facilities if interviewing on-site (coffee/tea/seating, etc.)<br>– Permission to use venues and locations other than your own | – Can take more time, but can go into more detail<br>– Can use visual aids<br>– Potential no-shows at agreed time<br>– Takes longer for each interview; more organising and liaison<br>– Security for interviewers visiting offsite locations |

**Data collection methods** continued

| Method | Who | Where and when | Resources Required | Considerations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Self-completion questionnaire at theatre or by post | Current audiences | Onsite, questionnaires distributed before or after performances or during interval | – Questionnaire and pencils or pens<br>– People to distribute questionnaires<br>– Can be either completed immediately and deposited in marked boxes, or taken home and posted back using Reply Paid (remember to budget for cost of returned questionnaires)<br>Onsite returns are quick; postal returns can be slow | – Must be (and appear) easy to complete<br>– Can distribute large number<br>– Easy to reach whole audience, difficult to reach only particular segments<br>– Watch for discarded questionnaires and littering<br>– Need to key responses into database; minimise need for handwritten answers<br>– People feel rushed or busy, may not take time to complete<br>– May not be statistically representative – certain people more likely to complete survey than others |
| Email | Current, lapsed | Office or home<br>If sent to home, Friday catches people on the weekend when they may have more time. | – Inexpensive, if done in-house<br>– Need up-to-date addresses<br>– Questionnaire needs to be well-designed for online responses | – Generally low response rates<br>– Bias towards Internet users |

## Designing your questionnaire

Designing a good questionnaire is a big challenge. It should be simple in appearance, flow smoothly from question to question and neither too long or too short. Collect as many examples of questionnaires as you can. We have included a DIY Audience Research Questionnaire in Module C.

A good questionnaire is:

**Appropriate to the target audience.** The language and the length of the questionnaire must suit your target audience. A 20-page survey distributed during the interval of a performance will not generate a good response, nor will a survey of non-attenders that includes a lot of technical terms. Consider the needs of children or adults, their level of involvement with theatre, and those for whom English is a second language.

**Clear.** Only one interpretation of a question should be possible and the instructions should be easy to understand. Make sure the layout and design are simple and that it is easy to complete.

**The right length.** The questionnaire should be appropriate for the time available. If it is a telephone survey it should take about five minutes. A theatre foyer survey should be shorter than a face-to-face interview by appointment.

**Tested.** After you create the questionnaire, try it out on a number of people to see how they react. Surveys almost always undergo a number of drafts before the final result is achieved.

## The questionnaires are filled in — now what?

Once the questionnaires have been completed, it is important to enter the data on computer and analyse the results. You can do this in-house using a simple spreadsheet program such as Microsoft Excel, or you can send the data to a professional research or data processing company to prepare the results on your behalf.

Module B of this toolkit will assist you with data processing, and the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire that is included in Module C was designed and tested to make the survey process easier for small to medium sized organisations.

## STEP 5
## Basic qualitative research

### What is qualitative research?

Qualitative research usually involves smaller numbers of participants than quantitative research, but requires spending more time with each one, and going into greater detail (think 'quality' of interview rather than number). It is useful when we want to know *why* people do things.

At its most informal, qualitative research means taking the time to talk to people, asking them what they think (and really listening to the answers). Talking to audience members, performers, staff and volunteers can provide you with very useful information.

It can also be a good starting point for actually defining your research problem and testing responses or reactions.

The people in your organisation who come into regular contact with audiences, whether they be ushers, booking staff, or volunteers, often see and hear a great deal. While this is not 'scientific research' it can provide market intelligence that can be explored through more formal research.

There are two main types of formal qualitative research:

- focus groups
- one-on-one interviews

Focus groups are facilitator-moderated discussions with a targeted group of people that are designed to find out how they think and why they act the way they do. Organising a focus group may appear easy – let's just get a few people together and ask them some questions! But the reality is more complex and difficult. Managing group dynamics, staying totally impartial and not leading the group in a particular direction can be challenging. Audience research organisations use trained professionals who often have a psychology background as facilitators.

Focus groups are a very popular form of audience research in the arts, and are useful as long as you approach the research project carefully and with an understanding of the problems that can arise.

Direct one-on-one interviews can also appear quite straightforward, but require skills on the part of the interviewer in terms of:

- managing situations and people
- getting the most from interviewees without revealing their (the interviewer's) personal opinions
- keeping interviewees on the subject without obvious interjection or pressure.

### Recruiting people to attend a focus group or one-on-one interview

Focus group and interview participants are selected according to the target audience specified for the research project. For example, individual target audiences might include:

- regular theatre attenders
- patrons who have not renewed subscriptions
- young people
- people who have only attended one type of performance rather than the full range of program offerings.

Sometimes (although the dynamics can be challenging) it is possible to mix two types of participants, for example, people who subscribe and people who don't, but this is generally not advised.

There are a number of ways to recruit participants:

- When conducting a survey, include a question that asks if the subject is willing to join a focus group. Follow up with an invitation to a focus group or one-on-one interview
- Telephone people on your database and invite them to attend
- Approach professional audience research companies that specialise in recruiting people for focus groups
- Approach volunteers or friends of your organisation
- Approach schools or universities.

### Where and when will the focus groups or interviews take place?

A typical focus group consists of eight to twelve participants; groups of less than six may not yield satisfactory results. You should keep in mind that people might not turn up, even when they say they will, and so over cater on numbers. (I.e. recruit twelve people to ensure ten turn up).

Interviews should be held in convenient places and times. Locate a quiet, comfortable room that contains a table sufficiently large for everyone to sit at. Sessions are normally recorded to capture all relevant information. Make sure that parking is readily available.

Remember that if people are giving up their time they probably expect some reward. It might be refreshments (snacks and drinks), a nominal payment or a special offer such as merchandise, vouchers or free tickets. Be sure to include catering costs, room hire, tapes/recording equipment and any participation incentives in your research budget.

Focus group discussions usually run for one to one and a half hours (the maximum amount of time most people can sustain interest in a discussion). One-on-one interviews are generally an hour or less.

**EXAMPLE — Using focus groups and surveys: La Mama Theatre, Melbourne**

La Mama Theatre was reviewing a number of issues in relation to its programming. Working with a research company and funding from Arts Victoria, two types of research were conducted — telephone surveys and focus groups. Because La Mama has the names and phone numbers of most of its ticket buyers, the researchers were able to contact them directly to invite them to participate in a phone survey or focus group. La Mama found the research valuable in helping them make decisions about performance times; for example, they introduced earlier starting times and matinees for senior citizens, and matinees for children's programs. They also received useful feedback about their program and constructive criticism about the venue.

### How is the focus group or interview conducted? What role does the facilitator play?

Before the focus group session or interview, the facilitator creates a discussion plan. This is done in consultation with the client, and outlines the basic questions to be considered. The plan acts as a reminder to the facilitator to make sure all the topics are covered. However, questions are not asked and answered in a consecutive fashion. The idea is to introduce a topic and, as much as possible, let the conversation go in whatever direction the groups takes it.

The facilitator begins the session with an introduction, explaining how long the interview will last, providing general information the participant(s) may require, and assuring everyone that the discussion will remain confidential. The assurance of confidentiality usually sets the group more at ease and assists in getting the conversation flowing.

A skilled facilitator is essential. They must manage the conversation flow, keep the group on the topics of interest, and avoid influencing the discussion in a particular direction or implying that some participants are on the 'right track' while others are not. Organisations often find that the best facilitator is someone who knows the company well, but is not directly involved in its management. They can keep the interview focused, but not become personally involved.

If you plan to do a number of focus groups or interviews, try to use the same facilitators throughout the process.

After the focus group sessions are completed, the facilitator prepares a report based on the interviews, including excerpts that are particularly relevant or interesting. The tape recordings of the sessions can be managed in several ways. In some cases complete transcripts are prepared, however this can be expensive and time-consuming. In other cases, staff listen to the tapes, prepare comments and analyse what they have heard. Generally, a combination of the two is useful. Take care to ensure the privacy of those participating and check that reports do not include information that could identify individuals.

**EXAMPLE — Using the results of focus groups: regional centres**

As part of its Five Year Cultural Strategic Plan, a regional council wanted to develop appropriate strategies to increase community involvement in the arts. They conducted research as part of their audience development program, including postal questionnaires and three focus groups. One focus group comprised current arts attenders, and two comprised potential arts attenders (respondents who indicated an interest in the arts although they were not currently participating).

One of the interesting outcomes from the focus groups was that, while current arts attenders wanted to experience wider involvement in the arts, they also enjoyed the companionship and support of their peers and the feeling of being part of a small, select group. On the other hand, potential audiences away from the major regional centre felt many of the activities that interested them were unavailable in their immediate area.

## STEP 6
## Analysing your information

### You've got a stack of surveys — now what?

Surveys and focus groups produce a lot of information. The next step is to make sense of it all by undertaking detailed analysis.

Entering the data into a computer and analysing it can be the most daunting part of research. There are two options:

– Process the information in-house
– Give it to an outside organisation to do the work on your behalf

Three factors should influence your decision:

– time available
– budget allocation
– in-house resources and skills

If you have plenty of time, you can process the information in-house using one of a number of software programs available. However if there is a time constraint, using an outside organisation will probably be faster.

Consider your project budget. If you have an adequate budget, there can be advantages in hiring an outside organisation to do the work. If you decide to do the work in-house, remember to allow for the cost of appropriate computer software.

Finally, consider the resources and skills at your disposal. If you have computer equipment and computer-savvy staff who have the time to allocate to the project, then there are major advantages in doing it in-house. On the other hand, if your organisation's computer equipment is limited, your staff get nervous around computers, or no-one feels confident about taking on a new commitment of this kind, it might be wise to consider outsourcing.

If you do not have the in-house capability to analyse survey data, ask for help early on. Most organisations that perform data analysis prefer to be involved from the survey design stage so they can ensure the data is collected in the most useful way. They will advise on how to word questions and categorise answers.

### The advantages of the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire

The DIY Audience Research Questionnaire in Module C was specifically designed to take the stress out of this phase of research. It has been fully tested, and collects information about such things as the demographic profile of audiences, their patterns of attendance, interests, sources of awareness, use of the Internet, etc.

**EXAMPLE — The Warrnambool Entertainment Centre, Victoria**
The Warrnambool Entertainment Centre (WEC) was one of the organisations involved in the pilot program for the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire. It used the questionnaire to survey audiences during a regional tour of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra in October, 2004. WEC's marketing manager reported that the open-ended questions provided useful comments that were incorporated into reports to the Centre's Advisory Board and to Council. Of particular interest were the reasons given for attending the performance, and also the fact that five percent of the audiences were from non-English-speaking backgrounds. With increasing numbers of migrants settling in the community, WEC intends to consider potential new audiences in future marketing activities.

## Reviewing completed questionnaires

Before inputting data you may need to edit the questionnaires.

For example:

- Discard questionnaires that are clearly inaccurate. Not everyone takes research seriously. If someone states he or she is a surgeon, but then ticks a box that says they have completed only primary-level education, they probably haven't been totally honest in the rest of the survey either.
- Look at incomplete questionnaires. Assign a 'no answer' or 'no response' category to unanswered questions.
- If the questionnaire includes open-ended questions (the respondent is asked to write an answer rather than selecting from pre-determined options), group the responses into categories. For example, responses such as couldn't see properly, had trouble seeing the whole stage, and my seat wasn't good as I couldn't see everything on the stage, could all be grouped under the heading 'poor sightlines'.
- Include an 'other' category for comments that do not occur frequently enough to warrant their own category.

## Analysing focus group data

Analysing focus group data is time-consuming, as you need to replay tapes (or read transcriptions) to identify key themes or issues that arose during the discussion.

Generally, the facilitator reviews the original discussion list and records comments under each main heading, classifying information by topic rather than when in the meeting the issue was discussed. For example, if a group started out discussing the convenience of booking, then shifted its focus to programming, back to problems with phone bookings, then onto a particular performance before concluding with someone's comments about their experience paying with a credit card, the facilitator would group together all the comments about bookings, regardless of when they appeared in the general conversation.

It is a good idea to listen to tapes and transcribe them as soon as possible after the session. That way it's easier to remember things and to note important points. If you are holding a number of focus groups in succession, you may become muddled about who said what, and in which group.

Where possible, use quotes that represent key points in the report so that the readers can 'hear' the respondents, not just read a summary of their comments. Take care not to identify specific respondents in the final report.

### Allow enough time for analysis

Analysing research can be time-consuming. You need to collect and check the questionnaires, prepare them for data entry, enter the data, then do the calculations and interpretation. Maintaining the same questions each time you do a survey makes it easier to compare results.

Most research uses a number of key techniques to analyse data. Consider the following:

- relative frequency: the number (or percentage) of respondents who give a particular response
- median: the mid-point, with half the respondents below this response and half above
- mean: the average response
- mode: the most frequently occurring response.

### EXAMPLE 1 — A sample question and response data from the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire (refer to Module C for the full DIY questionnaire)

Q. How many times have you attended a performance by Company X in the last 12 months?

| Times attended in past 12 months | Number of respondents | % |
|---|---|---|
| Three times | 15 | 11 |
| Twice | 35 | 25 |
| Once | 40 | 28 |
| Never | 50 | 36 |
| **Total** | **140** | **100** |

Median — the point at which there are as many answers above as below 'Once'

Mode — the most frequent response 'Never'

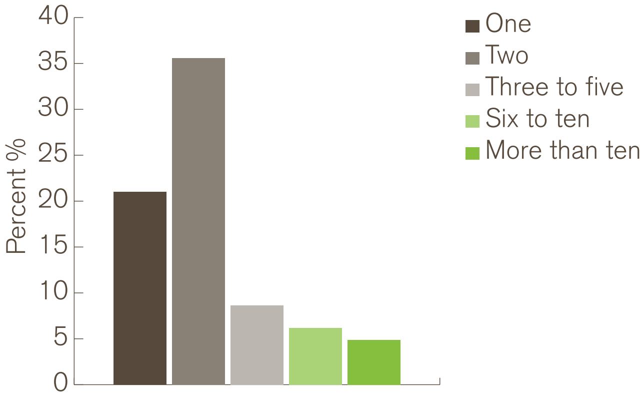
### EXAMPLE 2 — A sample question and response data from the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire

Q. Including this one, how many performances by this company have you previously attended?

| Answer | No. of respondents | % |
|---|---|---|
| One | 9 | 21 |
| Two | 16 | 36 |
| Three to five | 8 | 18 |
| Six to ten | 6 | 14 |
| More than ten | 5 | 11 |
| **Total** | **44** | **100** |

The following chart illustrates the response data from the above question.

How many performances by this company have you previously attended?




You may also want to consider cross-tabulating results. This means comparing information across questions; for example, analysing the ways in which people obtain information by the frequency of their attendance; looking at the age of subscribers in relation to the types of performances they attend, or in terms of whether they attend matinees or evening performances, on weekends or weekday evenings.

## EXAMPLE OF CROSS TABULATION

Victorian Arts Audiences: Cross Attendance

| **People at these events** | | | **Who also attended these events** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | People (,000) | % of Victorian Population (adults) | Mainstream Theatre | Small – Medium Theatre | Comedy | Contemporary Dance |
| Mainstream Theatre | 458 | 12.40% | – | 31% | 38% | 16% |
| Small – Med. Theatre | 266 | 7.20% | 54% | – | 48% | 20% |
| Comedy | 715 | 19.40% | 24% | 18% | – | 8% |
| Contemp. Dance | 210 | 5.70% | 35% | 26% | 28% | – |

Percentages indicate attenders at a given type of arts event (row headings) who also attended other arts events (column headings). For example, 31% of people who attended Mainstream Theatre events, also attended Small – Medium Theatre events in the 12 months prior to the research.

This information was undertaken by Roy Morgan Research in early 1997 on behalf of Arts Victoria and the Arts Marketing Taskforce.

It is important to consider the size of the sample when analysing sub-categories. If there are 100 survey respondents, but only eight of these are under 30 years of age, there is insufficient data to make informed decisions about the under 30 audience. A minimum of 50 responses in any single category is required to perform detailed analysis.

The more complex you want the analysis to be, the more data you may require, so try to keep the analysis simple and straightforward. If possible, reuse some basic questions each time you do a survey so that you can build up a detailed, comparable base of information.

## STEP 7
## Writing your report

Before you begin writing your research report, consider who will read it:
- How much do they need to know? (What level of detail do you need to provide?)
- How much time will they have to read the report?
- How much do they understand about audience research?
- How will they use the results?

You may end up writing more than one report, or writing a major report, then pulling out particular sections for different groups of people. You may decide to prepare:
- a detailed written report with an executive summary
- a summary report, covering only the major findings and highlights
- a talk or presentation
- workshops or seminars
- reports posted to your website
- media releases

A typical format for a written report should include:
- Executive summary – the highlights of the research
- Introduction – the background to the research
- Research objectives –what the research was intended to achieve
- Methodology – the type of research, number of surveys conducted, when and where the research was conducted
- Results – the findings of the research
- Summary and conclusions – the conclusions reached as a result of the research
- Implementation – how the research will be used by the organisation
- Appendices – a copy of the survey and any other detailed information as required

Keep a copy of the detailed report on your computer so that you can produce versions for sponsors, funding applications, your Board, annual report, and as supporting information for other activities.

Some tips for writing the research report are:
- Keep the audience for the presentation in mind. Don't use technical terms unless they will understand them
- Arrange the results in logical order (usually the order in which you asked the questions)
- Use tables and charts and label them clearly, but try not to use too many different types, as this can be confusing to the reader. Preface each results table with the relevant question
- Keep the main report as simple and straightforward as possible. Use appendices for detailed information
- Present the report in person to your Board and other key stakeholders so that you can go through it with them and answer any questions.

## More about graphs, charts and tables

Various types of visual aids can be helpful when presenting research results. The most common types are graphs, charts and tables. These tools can make the data easier to understand, but don't overdo the amount of information in any one item so that it becomes difficult to read or understand.

When preparing charts, graphs and tables:

- that feature colours or patterns, remember that people may photocopy your report or print it in black and white, so make sure it's clear in this format as well
- always provide a short written commentary to help people understand the visual aid
- give each one a number and a heading
- write out the relevant question in full
- always state the size of the sample
- include non-response replies.

### EXAMPLE of the use of a Table in a Report

**Table 1. Attendance** (*list the tables in consecutive order and give each a name*)

Question 1. Including this one, how many performances by this company have you previously attended? (*Write the question as it appeared in the questionnaire.*)

| *(Explain the category)* | *(Actual sample)* | |
|---|---|---|
| **Attendances** | **Total** | **Percent** |
| | N = 136* | = 100% |
| One | 83 | 61 |
| Two | 34 | 25 |
| Three to five | 7 | 5 |
| Six to ten | 4 | 3 |
| More than 10 | 5 | 4 |
| No answer *(include non-responses)* | 3 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 136 | 100% |

*N= the number of respondents. In this example 136 people answered the question.

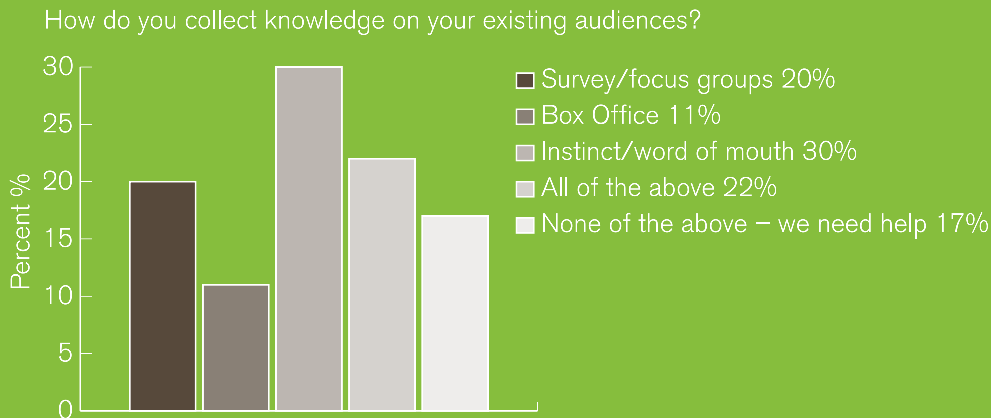
Accompanying text would read something like this;

As can be seen in Table 1, the majority of people surveyed were attending their first performance by the company. About one-quarter (25 percent) of the audience had attended one other performance and only four percent of respondents had attended more than ten.

The most common types of charts are:

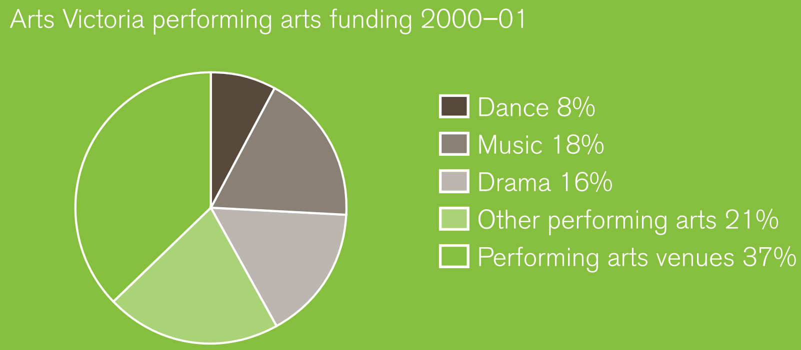
**Bar charts.** These work well when reporting on scales (for example, Very important to Not Important), or comparing audience segments or attitudes.

**EXAMPLE of Bar Chart — Fuel4Arts monthly poll. <www.fuel4arts.com>**
Previous Poll on Audience research




**Pie charts.** These work well when showing proportions of total audience.

**EXAMPLE — Arts Victoria Arts Count**
The performing arts sector, including venues, received around two-thirds of State Government arts funding in 2000-01. Of the $20.6 million funding for non-government performing arts organisations, venues received the largest proportion (37%), followed by other performing arts (including festivals) and music.




In 2000-01, Victorian-based arts organisations and artists received $10.5 million in Australia Council funding.

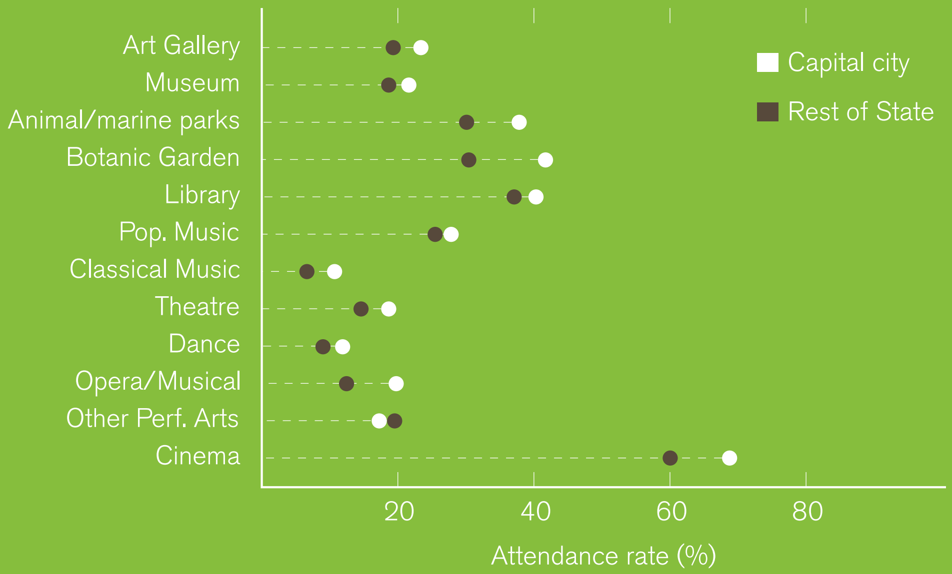
# MODULE A

**Line graphs.** These work well when comparing results over time or comparing the differences between categories or geographic areas.

**EXAMPLE — Statistics Working Group, Australia's Culture No 9. Attendance at selected Cultural Venues April 1999.**

**Where do they live?**

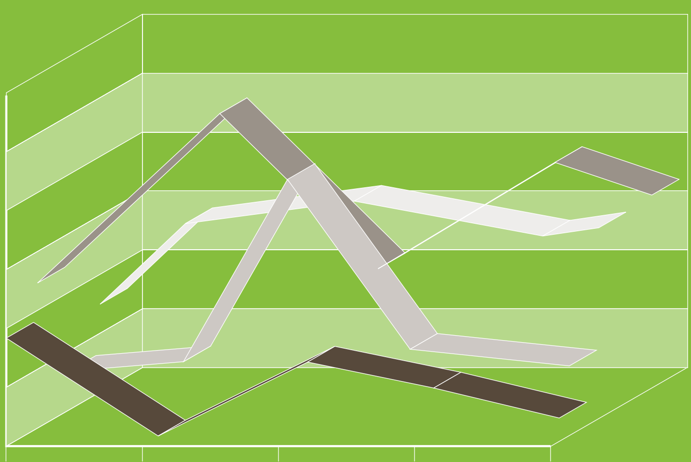
People living in the six State capital cities had higher attendance rates than people living in the remainder of the country for all venues and activities, with the exception of other performing arts.




The effective use of tables and other visual aids can also add impact to any presentations you do. Use graphs and charts in Microsoft PowerPoint or other programs, but don't get carried away with graphics for the sake of graphics.

**EXAMPLE — Confusing graph**

A confusing way to look at an analysis of arts audiences. This is not recommended.



## STEP 8
## Making the most of your research

You've finished the research and you've written the report. Now what? There's no point in doing research just for the sake of it. Research engages people and makes them think about you and your organisation.

Participants gave their time and their input, as did the Board when they approved the project and the staff and volunteers who conducted the surveys and handled the data afterwards.

All these people have invested time and thought into your organisation, so don't let them down. Circulate the results of the research, together with advice on what will happen next and what plans are in place as a result of it.

One of the reasons for doing research is that it provides you with information about how people are feeling and reacting to your products and services. If you asked respondents about their levels of comfort in the theatre, but have no intention of doing anything about it, there was no point in asking in the first place.

Schedule a meeting with relevant staff, Board members or volunteers to review the research and discuss its implications. Highlight the main results and discuss the issues that have arisen. What can you do with the information? How can you make it work for your organisation? If there is a lot of information, you may have to prioritise the results and deal with the most important issues first.

Make enough copies of the report for everyone who needs to see it. Send out media releases inviting additional comment or feedback. Consider giving presentations to appropriate groups such as other arts organisations, government arts groups, sponsors and, of course, your staff and your Board.

What if the research has uncovered negative feedback or findings that you feel are controversial or problematic? For relatively minor issues, consider how you will report the results and try to create the most positive 'spin' you can. Highlight the fact that negative information will assist the organisation to change and to redress problems that have been identified. Acknowledge the issues and affirm that the organisation's reaction to them is positive.

If there are major problems you may decide that the document should remain confidential, for the information of management and the Board only. In that case, let people know the work has been completed and that the Board is reviewing and addressing the issues. Such a scenario is rare, however. Generally, research gives you the basis for making positive announcements about new programs, facilities or services, or changes and improvements to your existing activities. If the results are very positive (everyone loves your work and what you do) then make the most of it by sending out media releases and celebrating your success with the world.

**EXAMPLE — Australia Council, Resourcing Dance: An analysis of the subsidised Australian dance sector**

The Australia Council commissioned Positive Solutions to undertake a review of the subsidised dance sector in 2003. When the research was completed, the Australia Council circulated the report widely, sent out media releases highlighting the findings and recommendations from the report and made it available both in hard copy and on their website. This ensured that the findings were widely circulated and that the arts community, and the dance sector in particular, were well informed about the project and had easy access to the report.

The important thing is to use research results to plan future activities for your organisation. Regularly review activities and conduct follow-up research to make sure the changes have been effective and the results positive. The more research you do – and at regular intervals – the better your database will be for benchmarking activities, customers' likes and dislikes and your ability to understand and promote to your audience.

The more you know about your audiences, the better you'll be able to assess their needs and match them to your organisation's mission and vision. This will lead to long-term success and effective use of resources.

**EXAMPLE — Arts Victoria Co-operative Marketing Case Studies**

Between 2001–2003, Arts Victoria funded a range of joint Audience Development and Marketing projects, involving 14 shires and over 30 arts organisations. The projects focused on:

1. audience research
2. audience development and marketing initiatives
3. training and skills development in effective arts marketing.

Arts Victoria recognised the importance of disseminating the information from the projects to a wider arts audience. The initiative was documented as a set of case studies to enable others to benefit.

Each case study provides an overview of the project's aims, research objectives, timelines, methodology and results. There is also a summary document outlining issues to be considered when undertaking audience development projects. The case studies can be downloaded from the Arts Victoria website at: <www.arts.vic.gov.au/arts/publications/marketingcasestudies.htm>.

Australian Government

Australia Council for the Arts

ARTS VICTORIA

Victoria The Place To Be

# MODULE B

## AUDIENCE RESEARCH MADE EASY

# MODULE B
# BASICS OF AUDIENCE RESEARCH

## SECTION 1
## Introduction

### Why is audience research important?

Audience research is essential to the health of an organisation. The more you know about your audiences, your product and your competition, the better you will be able to adjust to changing conditions, experiment with new concepts and grow.

Small to medium-sized performing arts companies use audience research to explore a range of things. The most important questions centre around:

- audience behaviour – how often do they attend? Who do they come with? Are they subscribers?
- audience reactions to programs – what do they like or dislike? What attracted them to the program they attended?
- audience reactions to services and facilities – how do they feel about the venue? Is it easy to make bookings?
- participation in other arts forms and arts activities – what else do they attend? What do they like and dislike?
- sources of information – how did they hear about a program? What sources of information do they use?
- basic audience demographics – who are our audiences? What is their gender, age, education level? Where do they live and with whom? How much do they earn?
- trends and developments taking place in the arts – how will these impact on our organisation?
- attracting greater audiences – what audiences would we like to attract in larger numbers? How can we reach them effectively?
- sponsorship – how can we assess the potential value of sponsorships and create viable sponsorship propositions?

The more we know about our audiences, the more we can make effective decisions about marketing and promotions, the venue, programming, pricing policies, potential sponsors and potential partners.

Audience research involves:

1. the planned and organised collection of information
2. using that information in practical ways to make decisions.

There are several types of research, including:

**Secondary research** – research that has already been carried out by others and which may be of use to your organisation.

**Primary research** – research an organisation conducts or commissions itself to find out the answers to specific questions.

Primary research is further divided into two categories:

**Quantitative research** – counts the number of people who behave in certain ways or hold certain attitudes. Quantitative research is often conducted by questionnaire, and is possibly the easiest research method for small to medium performing arts companies without specialist help.

**Qualitative research** – explores how people think or behave and why. Qualitative research often takes the form of in-depth interviews or focus groups. Usually the information is obtained through a facilitator who leads a discussion that covers the issues of interest. This type of research requires someone with experience in both research and group dynamics.

In this module we look at:

- secondary research, the advantages of using it and problems which can arise from time to time, and sources of research information
- quantitative research, using the DIY Audience Research Questionnaire (see Module C) as a model
- qualitative research, including the way in which organisations can effectively use focus groups.

## Achieving your marketing objectives

Most arts organisations have a number of marketing objectives. They generally want to:

- retain current audiences and build loyalty
- attract new audiences
- find ways to persuade lapsed audiences to return
- spend marketing budgets as effectively as possible
- monitor how audiences feel about their activities
- identify competitors and understand their strengths and weaknesses
- identify new opportunities
- identify changes in the operating environment which may impact on the organisation
- identify potential sponsorship and fundraising opportunities
- identify potential partners for co-operative marketing and audience development activities.

All of these outcomes require knowledge of audiences, their behaviour and attitudes. Basic audience research can be used in a variety of decision-making situations where an understanding of the organisation and its operating environment is required.

Audience research on current issues and trends, overseas innovations or particular audience segments (for example, studies of youth markets, seniors, or non-English speaking audiences) helps us to understand our operating environment; so too do comprehensive studies of particular sectors of the arts (such as contemporary dance, physical theatre or classical music) and studies of population trends (for example, the increasing urbanisation of the population, the ageing population, and the way people spend leisure time).

The more we know about our own operations and audiences, their reactions to what we offer and their spending and attendance patterns, the more effectively we can identify ways to improve. Sometimes it's a matter of looking at data we already have and analysing it in new ways (for example, information in our databases or available from the box office); at other times, we need to undertake research to fill in information gaps. The kind of research we undertake depends on our marketing questions, resources and the time available.

The following sections examine in detail the key types of research, why and how we use them, and what we do with the results.

**Worksheet: Audit of Market Intelligence**

Take a few minutes to conduct the following audit of your organisation's 'market intelligence'.

When it is complete, highlight the areas that would be most useful to your company.

### Audit of market intelligence

| Information | Have done formal research | Could make an informed guess | Don't know | Knowing this will help us… |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Audience:** | | | | |
| Age | | | | |
| Gender | | | | |
| Area of residence | | | | |
| Cultural background | | | | |
| Family composition | | | | |
| Occupation | | | | |
| Income | | | | |
| Education levels | | | | |
| **Behaviour:** | | | | |
| How they hear about performances | | | | |
| Reasons for attending | | | | |
| Leisure interests | | | | |
| Frequency of attendance (at our performances) | | | | |
| Attendance group characteristics | | | | |
| Other venues attended | | | | |
| Subscription usage | | | | |
| Internet usage | | | | |
| **Attitudes:** | | | | |
| Towards venue | | | | |
| Towards ticket purchase | | | | |
| Towards attending the performance | | | | |
| **Example:** | | | | |
| *Age* | | | √ | – *with funding proposals*<br>– *decide where we advertise* |

Review your answers. If the majority of them fall into the 'Don't know' category, consider starting with secondary research, then undertaking some informal qualitative research before conducting more detailed quantitative research.

If the majority of your answers fall into the 'Could make an informed guess' category, plan to conduct more formal research to determine if your guesses are, in fact, correct.

If the majority of your answers fall into the 'Have done formal research' category, you should have a fairly good understanding of your audience. However it is important to develop ongoing research, such as a quantitative questionnaire supported by qualitative research to keep your organisation up to date.

## SECTION 2
## Secondary research

There is a massive amount of research conducted by others that is publicly available and may be of value to your organisation. Secondary research is a cost-effective and timesaving way of gaining information. The challenge is locating the research that matches your research questions.

You may wish to learn more about:
- a specific market segment, such as youth or families
- your local community
- people who buy certain kinds of products, such as DVDs or computer games, or who attend particular sporting events or festivals
- a particular art form, for example, current trends in theatre or contemporary dance

You can use information from secondary sources to:
- identify industry trends
- understand your community in terms of its age, gender, education levels and current activities
- compare your audience demographics with those of your regions population to identify potential markets
- identify patterns of common behaviour or attitudes (for example, is the phenomenon of ageing audiences unique to your organisation, or is it common to other organisations and in other countries?)
- learn about research done by others which may be of interest to you
- learn about other projects to see if there are tips or guidelines that will assist you in doing your own research
- make contact with other individuals and organisations with similar issues or problems
- identify potential partners or sponsorship opportunities

### Internal records
Consider the potentially valuable information that is on hand within your organisation. The box office may be able to provide information such as:
- total tickets sold; tickets sold for individual performances
- popularity of weekend versus weekday performances or matinees
- numbers of sold-out shows
- when ticket sales take place (how many days in advance of the performance)
- proportion of tickets sold to subscribers compared with individual ticket purchasers
- addresses of ticket buyers
- gender of ticket buyers
- preferred payment options
- repeat purchases
- group versus individual purchases
- types of tickets (student, concession, full price, child).

This type of information assists you to learn more about audience behaviour and to begin building a more complete picture of your market.

## External secondary research

Begin any research project by spending some time exploring secondary research options. You may not find the exact information you require, but you can learn a lot, gain useful background information and perhaps make contact with others willing to share information and form networks.

The Internet is a good place to start. Collect data from individual organisations, government websites, specialist arts and cultural websites and State and national arts organisations, both in Australia and overseas.

Important sources of information on audience research and audience research include:

## Australian Bureau of Statistics

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) produces a wide range of data collected from the Australian census and other studies. While ABS data is often free of charge, the organisation also compiles and supplies very detailed information for a fee. Refer to the ABS website <www.abs.gov.au> to see what is available.

### EXAMPLE

Report No. 4901.0 Children's Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities, Australia (released in 2004) indicates that in the 12 months prior to the 2003 survey it was estimated that 95 percent of all children (5-14 years old) used a computer and that 64 percent accessed the Internet.

This particular report also provides details on the number of children involved in organised cultural activities such as playing a musical instrument, dancing, singing and drama; it even details the amount of time they spend practising, attending lessons, and looks at cultural participation in comparison with involvement in sports, recreational activities and time spent watching television or playing video games.

This type of information could be useful when your organisation is planning programs. While the general information is free of charge, you might want to request a quote for a breakdown of the data by State or region.

Examples of other types of ABS reports include:

- 4172.0 Arts and Culture in Australia: A Statistical Overview – a range of data from both ABS and non-ABS sources about cultural activities and cultural industries. Cultural data by topic (for example, participation in cultural activities, employment in cultural industries) and sector (for example, libraries and archives, performing arts)
- 3239.0.55.001 Population, Australian States and Territories – population figures, including numbers of births and deaths
- Average weekly expenditure on specific cultural activities – for example, art galleries and museums, live theatre, cinema, etc.
- Number of people employed in the arts and working as volunteers.

### Australia Council

The Australia Council, the Federal Government's principal arts funding and advisory body, has a catalogue of more than 60 arts-related publications (published by the Council and other sources) to assist artists and arts organisations.

Subjects include artforms, such as new media arts, contemporary arts and crafts, music theatre, writing, visual arts and crafts and popular music, community arts issues, disability and the arts, employment and economics, industry statistics and legal issues in the arts. About 15 titles concern arts marketing and audience development. All can be downloaded from the Australia Council website <www.ozco.gov.au>, or in some cases, ordered in hard copy. Of particular interest to small and medium performing arts companies are the following titles:

- *Access All Areas: Guidelines for marketing the arts to people with disabilities*
- *Arts Marketing: the pocket guide*
- *Australians and the Arts — Full report*
- *Australians' Attitudes to the Arts*
- *Let's Tour! A quick guide to exporting the Australian performing arts*
- *Selling the Performing Arts*
- *What's My Plan? A guide to developing arts marketing plans*
- *Who's My Market? A guide to research audiences & visitors in the arts*
- *The World is Your Audience: Case studies in audience development and cultural diversity*

### Arts RiPPA

Arts RiPPA <http://www.ozco.gov.au/research_centre/arts_rippa/> stands for Arts Research in Progress or Planned Across Australia. First produced in 1989 as Arts Research in Progress, RiPPA improves the information flow between policymakers, researchers, arts organisations and educational bodies. It lists hundreds of research projects that have taken place (or are currently taking place) across Australia. It includes both qualitative and quantitative research into arts audiences and participation, as well as analytical research into creative industry development, arts impacts, infrastructure support for artists and regulatory and policy developments.

Each listing states the name of the research organisation, a brief description of the project, the start and completion dates and contact details for the project manager.

### EXAMPLE 1 taken from Arts RiPPA

**Arts Queensland**

**Audience development for major performing arts companies**

This project involves conducting audience research to inform the development of new strategies to increase audiences for major performing arts companies.

Start 2004 Finish 2005

Contact: Bret Mannison Tel: 07 3227 6748

email: bret.mannison@arts.qld.voc.au

Partners/others involved: Queensland Performing Arts Centre, Queensland Ballet, Queensland Theatre Company, the Queensland Orchestra, Opera Queensland

### EXAMPLE 2 taken from Arts RiPPA

**Arts Victoria**

**Youth audience research: motivations and barriers to attendance amongst 12-17 year olds**

Qualitative and quantitative research into youth in metropolitan, outer suburban and regional Victoria including motivators and inhibitors (both perceptual and concrete) to increase participation in arts and cultural consumption.

Start: 2002 Finish 2004

Contact: Nicky Klempfner Tel: 03 9954 5060

email: Nicky.Klempfner@dpc.vic.gov.au

Partners/others involved: focus group of youth-oriented arts organisations

### fuel4arts.com

<www.fuel4arts.com> is a free, membership-based arts marketing website for arts professionals. It provides artists and arts organisations with the best international and national expertise and discussion on arts-focused marketing and audience development.

fuel4arts.com features links to other relevant sites around the world, case studies, research papers and reports, and publications (these come with an indication of the ‘degree of difficulty’ of the articles so you can see which ones suit those with relatively little marketing experience and which are more advanced).

fuel4arts.com also distributes a monthly newsletter, *The Gas*. Each edition provides a specific topic – for example, the April 2005 edition looked at DIY audience research and may be accessed from: <www.fuel4arts.com/gas/default.asp>.

fuel4arts.com also hosts email-based discussion forums where guest specialists offer free insight in response to members’ questions. The April 2005 edition on DIY Audience research can be viewed at the archive at: <www.fuel4arts.com/community/previousforums.asp#17>. The site has an excellent search facility, so you can easily find articles and reports.

### ArtsInfo

ArtsInfo <www.artsinfo.net.au> lists many resources for artists and cultural workers and includes links to useful sites. It is worthwhile checking the sites of particular artforms for information on research. For example, through ArtsInfo you can access the Australian Dance Council (Ausdance) site. There you'll see information about a report titled *Conceiving Connections*. This is a three-year study that aims to increase understanding of dance audiences by addressing problems that have been identified by the dance industry as critical to its viability among the contemporary performing arts in Australia.

ArtsInfo also gives you links to directories, portals and State government arts organisations. These sites publish the latest information on arts and audience research projects that may be of interest.

**EXAMPLE Snapshots — New South Wales Cultural Data: Adults and young people (18 years and over) living in NSW.**

About eight in ten people living in NSW attend a cultural venue or cultural activity in a year. That is over four million visitors and 87 million visits. About two-fifths of people in NSW use a public library — 1.9 million users.

Over half of the people in NSW attend a performing arts event (music, theatre, dance, opera, musical) during the year — 2.7 million patrons. Over one third of people in NSW visit an art gallery or museum — 1.7 million visitors.

Some 68 percent of people in NSW go to the cinema — 3.3 million patrons.

### Other arts organisations

Talk to other performing arts organisations to find out what research they have come across or done. It may be possible to share research information or to consider doing research together using the same questions and sharing the results.

### Your own Internet searches

Using search engines to look for information can be time-consuming, but it can also lead you to interesting and useful information from around the world.

Search engines include Google, Yahoo, AltaVista, Lycos, Dogpile, HotBot and Ask Jeeves. An efficient way to search is to place quotation marks around groups of words to make phrases. For example, keying in 'audience research' and 'performing arts' in Google generates more than 4,200 results. Click on the ones that sound interesting to go on a journey of discovery.

**EXAMPLE — Using search engines**

A search on the phrases 'audience research' and 'performing arts' in Google located an article about the Theatre Arts Marketing Alliance (TAMA), an informal association of mid-size, small and fringe theatre companies in Greater Boston, USA. TAMA members' year-long study of their audiences revealed that:

"According to the results, audiences at participating theatres are distributed through all age brackets, with the greatest concentration in the 45-64 age groups. The audience tends to be affluent, with a median annual household income of $75–$80,000, and the vast majority do not have children under the age of 18 living at home. Nearly 40% of respondents were attending their first performance by the theatre company, demonstrating that participating theatres are reaching out successfully to new audiences."

Source: Media release, Theatre Arts Marketing Alliance, Nicholas Peterson, March 8, 2005 <http://www.stonehamtheatre.org/781-279-2200/news/tama_releases_audience_research_results.html>.

If a particular report is of interest, consider contacting the relevant organisation and asking for more information, or perhaps searching further for the full audience research report.

Other sources for contact information and web links to international arts agencies and organisations include:

- the Canada Council <www.canadacouncil.ca>
- the Arts Council Scotland <www.scottisharts.org.uk>
- the Arts Council England <www.artscouncil.org.uk>
- the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies (NASAA), USA <www.nasaa-arts.org>.

You can also find commercial sites, proceedings from conferences and conventions, annual reports and other useful information on the Internet.

Remember to check the date of the work when downloading information from the Internet and consider how relevant it is to your own organisation, location or region. Try to gain some understanding of how the research was conducted. In most cases, when full reports are available, you can check the executive summary or the methodology sections of the report for this information. Material that you download from government arts agencies is likely to be reliable, however you may have to check work published by students, private individuals or organisations more carefully.

## SECTION 3
## Qualitative research

Qualitative research usually involves relatively small numbers of respondents. While the numbers may be small, the research is often quite time-consuming. The most common types of qualitative research are:

- observation
- in-depth interviews
- focus groups

### Observation

Observation is exactly that — watching people, monitoring what they do, perhaps even timing their activities. By directly observing behaviour you learn about your audience.

Types of basic observation might include:

- watching traffic flow in and out of your performance venue — where do people park? Where do they enter? Where do they wait for their friends?
- watching behaviour upon entry into the venue — do they immediately use the restrooms? Do they queue around the box office? Do they move directly to the bars or refreshment areas? Do they buy programs at the entrance, or just before they enter the theatre?
- watching behaviour and movement during and after the performance — how many stay in their seats during interval? How quickly do they resume their seats? How many go to the restrooms? What is the queue like at the bar or snack areas? How many are buying cold drinks and how many are waiting for hot drinks to be prepared?
- watching their reactions — how many stop to read information signs in the foyer? How many pick up an information sheet or subscription program on the way out? How many stop to read posters?

Observation can be used as a qualitative research tool at any time. The advantage of observational research is that it provides direct information about how people behave and what they do. The observer has a natural, unstructured opportunity to see what is 'really' happening, and can gain a true understanding of how patrons behave.

On the other hand, observation is time-consuming. The observer must only observe — it is important that they do not interact with patrons or try to influence or affect their behaviour. When conducting this kind of research, undertake a number of observations to ensure you have witnessed the behaviour of a representative sample of the population.

Another consideration is the possible ethical issues involved in observational research. While you can conduct informal observational research just by being alert and watchful, it is important to follow a few rules if you are planning a formal study.

If more than one person will be doing the observation, agree on a format for reviewing the results. Decide what you will be looking for and the types of people to be observed. Results are usually written as a report that includes information on:

- the setting or place where the research occurs
- the identity of the observers
- a description of the types of people being observed
- a description of the types of actions being observed
- a review of the actions and any unusual or notable variations in actions
- a summary of what was observed

Formal observational research is usually acknowledged by displaying signs in the foyer (or wherever the research is taking place) that state audience research is being conducted by the organisation and that patrons' privacy will be respected. If an audience member wonders why there is someone in the foyer with a clipboard or obviously taking notes, they will be reassured that all is well. Filming or videotaping the public is generally not recommended for privacy reasons.

### Interviews

Interviews provide very different information. Because the interviewer and the person being interviewed meet and discuss issues, there is a much higher level of personal interaction.

**Types of interviews** – there are two types of interviews. Structured interviews are where all interviewers use the same carefully worded questionnaire but have open ended questions (not a yes/no answer). In-depth interviews are where the interviewer does not follow a set out questionnaire, but has a list of topics to cover during the course of a more informal conversation.

**Interview skills** – because the contact is close and personal, the interviewer needs to have particular skills in dealing with people, managing interactions and creating an atmosphere that encourages honest responses. We generally use interviews to find out about subjects that might be fairly complex, detailed or perhaps sensitive.

**Organising interviews** – interviews can be expensive and time-consuming. The process involves:

- recruiting people for the interviews – identifying the people (or categories of people) to interview and contacting them
- organising a meeting place, setting up the room and equipment (comfortable chairs, tape recorder, video recorder or notepaper and pens, refreshments, etc.)
- providing some type of incentive – a small cash payment, free tickets, free snacks, complimentary merchandise such as a T-shirt or coffee mug – to thank participants for their time

In addition to the actual interviewing time, usually there are discussions beforehand amongst the interviewers, time spent drafting interview questions or a detailed questionnaire, recording transcripts or written notes to transcribe after the interview, and meetings afterwards to discuss the results. On the other hand, interviews provide an opportunity to explore topics, reactions and attitudes in-depth.

As with observation research, privacy is an issue. Data collected in interviews must be handled confidentially and sensitively. Information identifying a particular individual must not be disclosed and must only be used for the purpose for which it was gathered.

## Focus groups

Focus groups are moderated discussions with a target audience that are intended to discover how they think and why they act the way they do. They can be both easy and difficult to conduct: easy because they are more cost and time-efficient than a questionnaire and provide more in-depth responses; difficult for an untrained researcher who may find it hard to moderate a discussion and objectively analyse the group's responses.

The best time to use focus groups is when you want to gain an overall understanding of a problem or review a number of potential options. Focus groups can be helpful for:

- identifying product strengths and weaknesses
- prioritising a number of options
- generating or evaluating new ideas
- understanding how respondents feel about issues, observing the language they use and they way they link concepts and ideas

**Selecting a group** – your organisation's research objectives will define who to recruit for the focus group. For example, if you are studying youth audiences, define an age group, perhaps 17-25 year olds. You might decide to include full-time students, part-time students, young people working full-time or part-time and/or unemployed people in that age bracket. Three focus groups might be appropriate: one for students, one for employed youth and one for unemployed youth.

**Establish a timeline** – allocate about four weeks from start to finish. It will take that long to organise the groups, including recruiting people and organising a venue.

Hold focus group sessions in places and at times that are convenient for your target audience. Ensure the room is quiet, comfortable and contains a table sufficiently large to accommodate everyone, plus whatever recording equipment, materials and handouts you require. Light refreshments are usually served and participants thanked with free tickets, merchandise or small cash payments.

**Identify and invite participants** – focus groups usually consist of eight to twelve people. If there are more than twelve people it can be hard to moderate and control the group; groups of less than five may feel self-conscious. Remember, you usually need to invite at least ten to ensure eight attend (not everyone may turn up, even though they agree to come).

Use your existing database to locate and recruit participants, or approach people at other locations such as box offices, libraries, school campuses, public transport hubs, or other venues. If recruiting in another organisation's premises, make sure you obtain the approval of that organisation to approach people. Carry identification with you and a business card or a printed information sheet you can hand to people that you approach.

If telephoning people selected from a database, have a recruitment script on hand. Call prospects at least one week prior to the meeting date, and confirm their attendance the day before.

Your recruitment script might resemble this one:

*Hello, I'm [name] from xxx theatre. We are currently holding a number of discussion groups with members of our audience. This will help us plan for the future / improve our services / learn more about the needs of our audience.*

*We are looking for someone who is a full-time student and aged under 30 – does this describe you?*

*IF YES – would you be available to attend a group discussion on .... at..... It will take about one hour.*

*IF NO – thank you for your time. Would you be interested in participating in future research?*

**Generate the questions and brief the facilitator**
Set up the interview outline to make sure the most important issues are covered. The person acting as the facilitator should write a short discussion plan in advance, allowing plenty of time for the conversation to flow. While each focus group should cover the same topics, you may have to adapt the discussion outline for some groups, and the flow of the discussion will be different for each group. Try to use a facilitator who is not directly connected with your organisation, to maintain neutrality and ensure a more objective analysis of the results.

**Conduct the focus group** – the facilitator generally introduces themself to the group and explains why the research is being done. Participants are not usually introduced formally to others in the group.

After reassuring the group that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers, the facilitator indicates that the session will be recorded (audiotape, videotape, notes, etc.) and advises the group that the discussion is confidential and their comments will not be personally attributed.

After confirming that everyone consents to the session being taped, the facilitator opens the discussion with a general question; for example, what do they like to do in their spare time? Did they attend any festivals or events recently – or something similar? This sets the group at ease and provides an opportunity for everyone to contribute.

It is the facilitator's responsibility to ensure that all members of the group have an opportunity to contribute, that all issues are covered and that good group dynamics are maintained (no aggressive behaviour, vehement arguments, or rudeness). At the end of the session the facilitator asks for any final comments and observations and then thanks the participants for attending.

**Interpret and report the results** – the best way to analyse the results is to identify the key themes that emerged under each discussion plan heading. If appropriate, quotes that represent key points in the discussion are an effective way to illustrate responses.

## SECTION 4
## Quantitative research

Good audience research should be repeated over time to measure changes and trends. It is also beneficial to compare your research with that of other organisations or art forms to gain a greater understanding of arts audiences overall.

Arts Victoria has developed and tested an easy-to-use DIY Audience Research Questionnaire (see Module C) that allows companies to research and understand their audiences. Although it is designed for self-completion (for example, to distribute on theatre seats), you could easily adapt it for use as a postal survey, an administered questionnaire, or a telephone survey.

### Designing the questionnaire

The kinds of questions appropriate to all audience groups cover things like:

- audience demographics (for example, age, gender, income, education levels)
- Internet access and use of the Internet (a cost-effective way to reach audiences)
- interest in, and attendance at, a range of performing arts activities
- interest in different types of performances
- sources of information about arts activities
- motivation for attending performances
- satisfaction with the performance, venue and booking systems

A well-designed questionnaire is:

**Appropriate to the target audience** — the language should be clear, avoiding technical terms or industry jargon.

**Unambiguous** — only one interpretation of each question should be possible and the instructions easily understood.

**Of appropriate length** — the questionnaire should be easy to complete in the time available (if distributed at the theatre, short enough to complete during the interval or in a few minutes at the beginning or end of the performance).

**Well laid out** — clear and tidy questionnaires look simple and easy to complete (and are therefore more attractive to potential respondents).

**Tested** — test the questionnaire among people from the target audience to ensure it is user-friendly and clear, and to see that they understand all the questions.

The following table sets out the essential components of a well-designed questionnaire.

## Designing the questionnaire

| | |
|---|---|
| Basic information | Name and logo of the company.<br>Brief introduction describing why you are doing the survey and asking for the respondent's support. If using an incentive to encourage people to respond, provide brief information about it. |
| Privacy | Reassure participants that their responses will be treated confidentially. |
| Date | If doing a self-completion survey or person-to-person survey, date the questionnaire and name the performance, if relevant. |
| Questions | List the actual survey questions. They should be easy to read with clear instructions. |
| How to return the survey | For self-completion and postal surveys, provide clear instructions on how to return the survey (drop box in the foyer, postal return, etc.). |
| Thank you | At the end of the survey thank respondents for their participation. |
| Confidentiality | Remind participants that all responses are confidential. |
| Incentive | If using an incentive, describe the offer in full at the end of the survey. |
| Contact details of respondent | If you are offering incentives or inviting people to be on your mailing list, ask for their contact details. Respondents may not want to disclose sensitive information such as income range in the survey, and then provide their name and address. Consider including a separate page or detachable form to ensure privacy. |

## Writing the questions

There are two types of questions: closed and open.

Closed questions are those where the respondent ticks a box from a list of options. For example:

*Have you attended a ballet performance? Yes* ◯ *No* ◯ *Can't remember* ◯

Open questions are those where the respondent is required to give their own answer without any choices being offered. For example:

*What did you enjoy most about the ballet?* ______________________

A good questionnaire uses a combination of open and closed questions to provide variety and to improve data analysis.

### Tips for writing questions

- Use simple language
- State questions in a positive rather than negative way when possible

  For example: Do brochures have enough information? Rather than

  Was there not enough information in the brochures?
- Avoid double-barrelled questions (two ideas in one question)

  For example: Did you like the venue and the seating?
- Ask questions with a 'neutral voice' to avoid leading the respondent to a desired answer

  For example, avoid: Don't you think that tonight's performance was especially good?
- Include instructions when necessary about how to complete the question

  For example: Tick one box only, or Tick all answers that apply
- Balance closed questions that use scales. Ensure the range of answers is the same on both ends of the scale

  For example: The performance was: excellent, very good, good, average, poor, very poor, extremely poor rather than

  The performance was: excellent, great, good, average, poor, not very good
- Allow some open ended questions for respondents to comment on things they are dissatisfied about
- Maintain consistency between questionnaires conducted at different times so you can compare results. Use the same wording and categories for things like education level, who they attended the performance with, age, or income
- Be polite. Say 'please' and 'thank you'.

### Collecting the data

**Telephone interviews** – to conduct telephone surveys you need:

- a database of names – perhaps from your list of subscribers, box office ticket sales, those who have requested programs, etc. The list must be large enough to guarantee sufficient responses

  As a rule of thumb, six contacts will result in one completed interview, and you should have a minimum of 50 completed interviews for any category or sub-category. For example, to compare youth subscribers and regular subscribers, you would need 50 completed interviews from each group
- an introductory script identifying the caller and briefly explaining the reason for the research

  If you have a specific target audience in mind, include introductory screening questions to ensure the person meets the criteria

  For example: Today we are interviewing people who have attended three or more performances. Can you tell me if that describes you?

  A telephone questionnaire should take no longer than ten minutes for a committed audience member and five to seven minutes for an occasional or non-attender.

Conduct interviews at different times and different days of the week to make sure you obtain a representative sample.

**Face-to-face interviews** – some issues to consider include:

- providing interviewers with formal identification and a brief introductory script explaining the reasons for the research and the privacy rules that apply
- while the actual interviews should be short, and therefore do not require seating, interviewers will need a quiet, semi-private area to work from, where they can sit, write up notes, etc. between interviews
- briefing interviewers about the sampling method being used; for example, younger audience members, women, or a random sample of every fifth person entering the theatre
- keeping the questionnaire brief. Interviews conducted in the foyer or on the street should take no more than five minutes

**Self-completion questionnaires** – some issues to consider include:

- planning the survey distribution. Will you place one on every seat before admitting the audience, or hand them to people as they enter or leave at interval? Or will you distribute them to a random sample of people either at their seats or in the foyer?
- providing pencils or pens at the venue or with the questionnaire if you want people to complete the survey while still at the venue. (Write these off as a research expense – don't expect to have them returned!)
- keeping the questionnaire brief. They should easily be able to complete the survey during the interval or post show
- making sure that the system for returning completed surveys is easy and obvious. Place clearly labelled boxes with a slit cut in the top (implying greater confidentiality) in prominent locations around the foyer
- clearly stating on the questionnaire how to return it at a later date – not everyone will complete the form on the spot. Include a Reply Paid address or design the questionnaire so that it can be folded into a Reply Paid format and mailed back
- making sure that all staff, especially front of house staff, know the survey is being distributed. Train ushers to explain to patrons why it is important they participate and return the questionnaire, and ask them to collect any uncompleted questionnaires that are lying about
- collecting the completed questionnaires regularly, then bundling and labelling them with the number collected and the date and time of the performance at which they were distributed
- monitoring the number of responses received
- storing completed research forms carefully – you have worked hard to obtain them!

**Remember the sample size**

For most research, a sample size of 100–200 is sufficient. However, to effectively analyse a sub-category within a sample, such as frequent attenders or audiences under 30 years old, you need at least 50 responses in that sub-category.

## SECTION 5
## Analysing and interpreting results

### Entering the results

Once you have accumulated the required number of questionnaires, the real work (and the interesting part) begins. Check through all the questionnaires to make sure they have been completely filled in.

If some questionnaires are only partially completed (the answers to one or two questions are missing), you may decide to use them and add a 'no answer' category. If more than a few questions are unanswered, however, discard that questionnaire.

There are two options for entering the results:

- Do it yourself in-house, using staff or volunteers
- Hire a research or data processing company to input the data for you

If you are using a self designed survey, you will need to set up a suitable program using software such as Microsoft Access or Excel, MacSurvey or PowerTab. Remember that purchasing and setting up programs can be expensive and time-consuming and you will need skilled assistance.

### Coding answers

Closed questions (those that require the respondent to answer Yes or No or tick a particular answer from a list), are simple to enter into a computer. The DIY Audience Research Questionnaire in Module C features all the information you need.

For open-ended questions you will need to pre-code your results. This means going through the questionnaires to get a sense of the broad categories of the responses, then setting up headings to cover them.

The following is an example of an open-ended question:

*What did you like most about the experience of attending the performance?*

Some written responses might include:

- *I liked the play, it was interesting*
- *The play was challenging and amusing*
- *The venue – easy to get to*
- *We attend most performances at the regional arts centre*
- *The programme, interesting plot*
- *I like anything by that playwright*
- *The performances*
- *The actors were really good*
- *The theatre was comfortable, good seating*
- *I enjoyed the play and the acting was great*
- *My cousin was in the play and got me free tickets*

Looking at these responses, three answer categories are clear.

### The production

- *I liked the play, it was interesting*
- *The programme, interesting*
- *I enjoyed the play and the acting was great*
- *The play was challenging and amusing*
- *I like anything by that playwright*

### The venue

- *The venue – easy to get to*
- *The theatre was comfortable, good seating*
- *We attend most performances at the regional arts centre*

### The acting

- *The performances*
- *The actors were really good*
- *I enjoyed the play and the acting was great*

Depending on how many people received free tickets, the *My cousin was in the play and got me free tickets* response would probably go into an 'Other' category.

It is preferable if only one or two people code the open-ended question responses to ensure consistent categorisation.

### Interpreting the data

Depending on the system in use, interpreting the data can be as simple as pressing a button or as complex as writing your own program.

Other types of analysis that you can do in-house (in addition to computer-generated information) include looking at:

- the total number of responses to a question, to determine the median response – the mid-point, where half the respondents are below and half above a particular response
- the mode – the most frequently occurring answer.

**EXAMPLE**
Q. How many times have you attended a performance by our Company in the last 12 months?

| **Times attended in past 12 months** | **Number of respondents**<br><br>**ABSOLUTE FREQUENCY** | **Total number of visits**<br><br>**NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS MULTIPLED BY NUMBER OF VISITS** | **Proportion**<br><br>**% OF TOTAL SAMPLE** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Three times | 10 | (10 people X 3 Visits) = 30 | 10 people ÷ 120 = 8% |
| Twice | 20 | (20 people X 2 Visits) = 40 | 20 people ÷ 120 = 17% |
| Once | 40 | (40 people X 1 Visit) = 40 | 40 people ÷ 120 = 33% |
| Never | 50 | (50 people X 0 Visits)= 0 | 50 people ÷ 120 = 42% |
| **Total** | 120<br><br>*(total number of people who filled in the questionnaire)* | 110<br><br>*(total number of visits by all respondents)* | 100% |
| Total number of visits ÷ Total number of survey respondents | | Mean<br><br>110 ÷ 120 | 0.92 |
| Approximately half the sample above and half below this point | | Median *(as many answers above this number as below)* | Once |
| The most frequently given answer | | Mode | Never |

## Cross tabulation analysis

In addition to looking at the answers as a whole, you can look at various sub-categories. Dividing the questionnaires into various categories (for example, reviewing them by age categories or by frequency of attendance) may provide additional insights into audience behaviour or attitudes. However, as noted previously, sample sizes of less than 50 are not recommended.

You may want to simply separate the questionnaires into different categories and generally review them to see if any interesting patterns emerge.

### Some tips for making analysis easier

- Edit the questionnaires as they come in, putting the correct codes against open-ended questions, and checking that all the questions are completed
- If you are conducting a large number of surveys, enter the results into the computer on an ongoing basis, rather than waiting until you accumulate an enormous and daunting stack
- Decide which statistical analyses you want to perform. For more sophisticated analyses, get appropriate skilled assistance to set up the computer programs you require. (Remember, however, that complex mathematical information may be interesting, but you must be able to explain it to others. Make sure you understand the methodology)
- Check the data as it comes in to see that it makes sense. Do percentages total 100 percent? Are there any odd or unusual answers that warrant checking the original surveys or conducting other investigations? For example, if an unusually large number of older people attended an event, and it seems out of line with normal patterns, you might check to see if the survey occurred during Seniors Week
- Examine the final data for patterns and answers to key questions and write the results of the study
- Allow plenty of time for analysis and report writing. Once the questionnaires have been administered, your managers, Board and others may be keen to learn the results as soon as possible. Allow time to enter the data into the computer, analyse the information and write the report.

If you do not have the in-house capability to handle the analysis of the survey, or if you want particularly detailed mathematical analysis or complex cross-tabulations, ask for help early in the process. Most data analysis professionals prefer to be involved from the very start; that is, from survey design to sampling decisions.

## SECTION 6
## Presenting and implementing your results

There are a variety of ways you can report the results of surveys, including:

- a formal written report with appendices and an executive summary
- a summary report, featuring highlights and major findings
- talks and illustrated presentations
- workshops and/or seminars
- information on your organisation's website
- media releases

You may want to use a combination of methods. While a formal written report is generally the main output, other elements can be extracted, repackaged and presented in various formats. For example, you may need a fairly simple report for front-of-house staff and volunteers, a detailed report for the Board, a presentation you can make to other arts companies, and information and media releases on your website for the public. Having all the material in the formal report makes it easier to develop other materials.

A typical format for the formal written report includes:

- Executive summary – highlights of the research
- Introduction – background to the research
- Research objectives – what the research was intended to achieve
- Methodology – the type of research, number of surveys conducted, when and where the research was conducted, etc.
- Results – findings of the research
- Summary, conclusions and recommendations – conclusions reached as a result of the research
- Implementation – how the research will be used by the organisation
- Appendices – a copy of the survey and any other detailed information required

Some tips for writing your research report:

- Use graphics if they make the data easier to understand and if you are planning presentations. Producing charts with standard computer programs is quite simple, and there are also websites that can help

  For example, <http://nces.ed.gov/nceskids/graphing> is a site specifically designed for students that makes preparing a variety of graphs extremely easy

- Tailor the language to suit your audience. If you will be presenting to people who understand your organisation and its research, be as technical as you like; otherwise, present information in plain English

– Format the report logically. Generally, analysis of questions is grouped under relevant headings and in the order in which the questions were asked. For example, under the heading audience profile, include all the demographic information questions (age, gender, place of residence, education levels, income); another section titled attendance patterns would present information on frequency of attendance, type of ticket purchased and subscription status
– It may be useful to incorporate information from other sources to make your research more meaningful; for example, by comparing the age of your audience with the results of published studies by other performing arts organisations
– Use the summary, conclusions and recommendations section of the report to interpret the survey results and identify what you think are the implications for your organisation. For example, if respondents have consistently complained about being kept on hold for bookings, you may recommend hiring additional staff, installing more telephone lines, or extending box office hours
– After writing the report, archive all the relevant material, including the questionnaires. Make copies of the computer databases and the results. You may want to refer to the questionnaires again, perform other types of cross-analysis or analyse different sub-group data.

### Making the most of your research

Research is only worth doing if it is practical and useful and assists the organisation to answer specific questions or make informed marketing and business decisions. Completing the report marks the conclusion of the research. Now it is important to act on the information and make decisions.

Circulate the report to all the relevant people in your organisation – staff, volunteers, Board members, perhaps even sponsors and funding partners. Consider circulating a summary of key findings through your website, a newsletter or media release, to notify people who participated in the research that the study has been completed.

Act on your recommendations. Research provides information about audiences – who they are, and how they react to your organisation's products and services. Armed with this information, develop a plan of action that responds to the issues identified.

You may decide to include certain recommendations in your next business or marketing plan, or to present the report and recommendations for action to your Board for more immediate implementation. Sometimes research raises questions or issues that require more study and analysis.

While some research has very positive outcomes, it may also highlight problems or concerns. After changes are made or new initiatives launched it may be appropriate to conduct the research again to compare results and see if there are improvements.

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# MODULE C

## AUDIENCE RESEARCH MADE EASY

# MODULE C

# CONDUCTING YOUR OWN AUDIENCE RESEARCH: USING THE DIY AUDIENCE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Part 1 — Introduction — using the questionnaire

Part 2 — Printed sample of the questionnaire

Part 3 — Guidelines for gathering and entering data and generating results

## Part 1 — Introduction — using the questionnaire

This module contains a questionnaire that will enable you to conduct your own audience research surveys. The questions have been designed to provide useful, practical information in an easy-to-use format so that you can start doing effective research immediately.

As well as the questionnaire, there are recommendations about distribution, collecting completed questionnaires, checking and entering data and generating results.

## Part 2 — Printed sample of the questionnaire

The DIY Audience Research Questionnaire is designed as a self-completion survey that can be printed (on your letterhead or other paper that carries the organisation's name, address, ABN number, etc.) and distributed to audience members. It includes an introduction and 30 questions.

The questions are designed to gather information about respondents' attendance patterns — frequency, whether or not they are subscribers, and attendance at, and interest in, other venues and events. It gathers demographic information (age, gender, marital status, income, place of residence, education level, ethnicity), asks questions about the venue and booking processes, and how they heard about the performance. Questions 8 and 22 can be tailored to your specific area and organisation. Companies and venues in States and Territories other than Victoria will also need to tailor question 7 to their needs.

# MODULE C

INSERT LOGO /
INFORMATION HERE

| OFFICE USE ONLY |
|---|
| QUESTIONNARE IN NO: |

## Audience Survey

Thank you for attending today's performance. To help us understand more about our audiences we are conducting an audience survey and we'd like to include your views. Please take a few moments to complete this questionnaire by ticking the boxes or writing your answers in the space provided. Be assured that your responses are entirely confidential.

Please fold and place your completed questionnaire in the box provided.

Name of Production:

Venue:

Performance Date:

Q1. Including this one, how many performances by this company have you previously attended? (**Tick one**)

One ○1 Three to five ○3 More than ten ○5
Two ○2 Six to ten ○4

Q2. Have you ever subscribed to this company? Yes ○1 No ○2

Q3. Do you subscribe to this company now? Yes ○1 No ○2

Q4. How did you first hear about this performance? (**Tick one**)

Season brochure/subscription ○1
Flyer/poster ○2
Advertisement in newspaper ○3
Other advertisement ○4
Article ○5
Word of mouth ○6
Email/Internet ○7
Read a review ○8
Other (please specify) ○9

Q5. What was the main reason for you to attend this performance? (**Tick one**)

Part of a subscription ○1
The reputation of the company ○2
Know someone in the show ○3
Subject matter ○4
A review I read ○5
Recommended by someone ○6
An advertisement/promotion ○7
Like attending this venue ○8
Insert Name of Guest Artist Here ○9
Other (please specify) ○10

# MODULE C

Q6. Including this performance, how many times have you been to a live performance of any kind in the last 12 months? (**Tick one box only**)

Once only ○ 1     2-4 times ○ 2     More than 5 times ○ 3

Q7. Which of the following major venues or events have you attended for a live performance in the last 12 months? (**Please tick as many as applicable**)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| The Arts Centre | ○ 1 | Melbourne Festival | ○ 6 |
| CUB Malthouse/Malthouse Theatre | ○ 2 | Fringe Festival | ○ 7 |
| Melbourne Theatre Company | ○ 3 | Opera Australia | ○ 8 |
| Melbourne Symphony Orchestra | ○ 4 | The Australian Ballet | ○ 9 |
| Melbourne Comedy Festival | ○ 5 | None of the above | ○ 10 |

Q8. Which (if any) of the following have you attended a performance by in the past 12 months? (**Please tick as many as applicable**)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| <Company/Event > | ○ 1 | <Company/Event > | ○ 7 |
| <Company/Event > | ○ 2 | <Company/Event > | ○ 8 |
| <Company/Event > | ○ 3 | <Company/Event > | ○ 9 |
| <Company/Event > | ○ 4 | <Company/Event > | ○ 10 |
| <Company/Event > | ○ 5 | None of the above | ○ 11 |
| <Company/Event > | ○ 6 | | |

Q9. For each of the following art/cultural events, please indicate your level of interest. (**One tick per line**)

| | Not Interested | Quite Interested | Very Interested |
|---|---|---|---|
| World Music | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Musicals | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Classical Music | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Experimental/New Music | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Popular Music | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Jazz | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Opera | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Contemporary Dance | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Ballet | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Theatre | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Circus/Physical Theatre | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Comedy | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Visual Art Exhibitions | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |
| Museums | ○ 1 | ○ 2 | ○ 3 |

# MODULE C

Q10. Thinking about the venue for this performance, how would you rate the following? (**One tick per line**)

| | Very poor | Poor | Average | Good | Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Comfort of the venue | ◯1 | ◯2 | ◯3 | ◯4 | ◯5 |
| Atmosphere of the venue | ◯1 | ◯2 | ◯3 | ◯4 | ◯5 |
| Suitability to the performance | ◯1 | ◯2 | ◯3 | ◯4 | ◯5 |
| Being an easy place to get to | ◯1 | ◯2 | ◯3 | ◯4 | ◯5 |

Q11. How easy did you find it to purchase a ticket for the performance? (**Tick one**)

Simple ◯1 Somewhat difficult ◯2 Very difficult ◯3

Q12. If you found it somewhat difficult or very difficult to purchase a ticket please tell us why.

________________________________________

________________________________________

Q13. What did you like most about the experience of attending today's/tonight's performance?

________________________________________

________________________________________

Q14. What specifically about your experience of attending today's/tonight's performance could be improved?

________________________________________

________________________________________

**Now just a few more questions for analysis purposes**

Q15. Are you: Male ◯1 Female ◯2

Q16. Which of the following broad age groups best describes your age? (**Tick one**)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Less than 15 years | ◯1 | 35-44 years | ◯5 |
| 15-17 years | ◯2 | 35-54 years | ◯6 |
| 18-24 years | ◯3 | 55-64 years | ◯7 |
| 25-34 years | ◯4 | 65 plus | ◯8 |

Q17. How many people – including yourself – attended this performance?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Attended alone | ◯1 | Attended with 4 to 9 others | ◯4 |
| Attended with 1 other | ◯2 | Attended with 10 or more | ◯5 |
| Attended with 2 others | ◯3 | | |

# MODULE C

Q18. What is your residential Post Code? ______________ If International please tick ◯1

Q19. Which categories below best describes your household type? (**Tick one**)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Single person | ◯1 | Single parent with dependent child(ren) | ◯4 |
| Couple without dependent children | ◯2 | Group household | ◯5 |
| Couple with dependent child(ren) | ◯3 | Other (please specify) ______________ | ◯6 |

Q20. Do you have access to the Internet?

Yes ◯1 No ◯2

Q21. If yes, which of the following do you use the Internet for?
(**Tick as many as apply**)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| For email | ◯1 | To find out what's on in the arts | ◯5 |
| For work | ◯2 | To book tickets for arts events | ◯6 |
| For shopping | ◯3 | None of these | ◯7 |
| For entertainment/games | ◯4 | | |

Q22. ***Add your own question on this line***

Yes ◯1 No ◯2

Q23. In which country were you born?

Australia ◯1

Other English-speaking country (please specify) ◯2 ______________

Non-English-speaking country (please specify) ◯3 ______________

Q24. Are you of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander descent?

Yes ◯1 No ◯2

Q25. Do you speak a language other than English at home?

Yes ◯1 No ◯2 If yes, please specify ______________

Q26. Please indicate whether you…

Work full time ◯1 Work part time ◯2 Not in paid employment ◯3

Q27. Are you a student?

Yes ◯1 No ◯2

# MODULE C

Q28. Do you work in the Arts sector? Yes ◯1 No ◯2

Q29. What is the highest education level you have attained to date? (**Tick one**)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Primary School | ◯1 | Bachelor Degree | ◯5 |
| High School | ◯2 | Graduate Diploma/Certificate | ◯6 |
| Certificate | ◯3 | Postgraduate Degree | ◯7 |
| Diploma/Advanced Diploma | ◯4 | Other (please specify) | ◯8 |

________________________________________

Q30. What is your approximate annual household income before tax?
(For persons living in a group household where income is not pooled, please give your individual income)

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Under $20,000 | ◯1 | $60,000-$79,999 | ◯4 |
| $20,000-$39,999 | ◯2 | $80,000-$99,999 | ◯5 |
| $40,000-$59,999 | ◯3 | Over $100,000 | ◯6 |

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire**

## PART 3
## Guidelines for gathering and entering data and generating results

### Getting a good response

Successful audience research involves getting as many questionnaires back as possible. Make sure you:

- print an attractive questionnaire. Use good quality paper and printing. It should look professional, uncluttered and easy to complete
- put up notices advising the audience about the research and letting them know that it will assist in improving services and facilities
- provide a table with pens or pencils near the collection boxes in the foyer
- provide clearly marked large collection boxes labelled with something like: *Place your completed questionnaires here, thank you*
- place collection boxes near all the exits to make it easy for people to return questionnaires on their way out
- train staff or volunteers so that they can explain the reason for the research in a friendly and polite manner
- consider a prize draw of some sort. Organise a suitable prize, collect names, addresses and phone numbers of respondents, and ensure that the winner is notified and receives the prize. Free tickets or merchandise (posters, clothing, coffee mugs, programmes, CDs or DVDs) are suitable.

### Sample size

The number of questionnaires required depends on the size and type of your audience, but ideally you should collect at least 75–100 usable completed forms per production to ensure reliable and representative results.

The response rate for this kind of survey is around 30–40 percent. Therefore, you need to distribute around 350 questionnaires to return a sample size of 100. Obviously, the more completed questionnaires you can collect, the better.

If a production is running for several nights or some weeks, structure the research over a representative spread of performances to avoid bias. Conduct surveys on a week night, a weekend night, a matinee and at shows at both the beginning and end of the run. In general, try to cover a minimum of three performances.

### Distributing and collecting questionnaires
With self-completion surveys, the greater the response rate, the more accurate the study. Do whatever you can to encourage people to participate and make it easy for them to do so.

There are normally two ways of distributing questionnaires:

1. Hand them to audience members as they enter the theatre
2. Place them on every seat before the audience is admitted

If possible, make an announcement about the questionnaire before or after the performance to reassure people that it will assist the company and that the information will remain confidential.

Place a collection box or boxes in visible locations in the foyer or wherever practical. You may also need to supply pencils or pens. Ask staff or volunteers in the foyer or near the collection boxes to hand out pencils or pens.

Keep track of the number of questionnaires distributed and returned at each performance. Check the questionnaires as soon as possible to ensure they have been properly completed (all or most questions answered). Bundle and label the questionnaires from each session so that you can identify which ones came from particular performances.

### Entering the data and generating results
Review the information in Section 5 of Module B *(Analysing and interpreting results)* about entering the results of surveys, coding answers to questions and interpreting data.

Remember, there are two options for entering results – do it in-house, or get a data processing or research company to do on your behalf.

If doing it in-house using staff or volunteers, there are a number of specially designed research software packages for sale (check the Internet), or use Microsoft Access, an Excel spreadsheet, MacSurvey or PowerTab. The Industry standard is SPPS <www.spss.com/au>.

Depending on the system used, interpreting the data can be as simple as pressing a button or as complex as writing your own program.

Enter survey results into the computer on an ongoing basis. Don't wait until you have a hundred or more surveys – that would be a daunting task! Ask the same people to work on all the completed surveys if possible, as this is useful when coding the open-ended questions. The people who enter the data may get a 'feel' for patterns of response or particular comments that are repeated.

Allocate sufficient time to check the questionnaires, enter the data, analyse the results and write the report. Don't feel pressured into producing quick, but possibly inaccurate, results.

If your organisation does not have the time or the in-house capability to handle the survey analysis, budget extra time and money for external help. Contact a data processing or audience research organisation for assistance, preferably before you actually distribute the questionnaires. They may have valuable suggestions or recommendations.

### Making the most of your research results
The ultimate aim of audience research is to enhance decision-making that will improve your company, increase audience numbers, or deliver a better experience to existing audiences. What could be more exciting, valuable and rewarding?

Collecting data and then writing a report that is filed away and forgotten is a waste of time, resources and money. Research is a powerful tool – so make the most of it to move your organisation forward.

# CONCLUSION

"Comprehensive, reliable and current sources of audience data (is) a critically important foundation on which arts organisations can strengthen existing audiences and attract new ones" (Audience and Market Development Division, Australia Council).

Research need not be expensive, but it does require time and careful planning, attention to detail and sense of direction. Good, solid audience research, carefully planned and well executed, can provide small to medium performing arts groups with information on which to build a strong financial and creative future.

We hope that *Audience Research Made Easy* has assisted you with the tools and knowledge you need to create your own research projects, and to better know your audience.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Absolute frequency** – the number of respondents indicating a particular response (as opposed to a percentage); for example, the total number of respondents who had attended a performance once.

**Analytical research** – seeks to understand the how and why; for example, motivations and barriers to attendance.

**Appendice** – information that supplements the main text of a book or other publication.

**Attender** – person who attends performances. In research terms, usually segmented by those attending frequently, regularly, occasionally or for the first-time (or once only). Defining segments depends on how regularly a company performs in a locality.

**Bias** – factors that influence research findings, permitting prejudiced or non-objective results. Bias occurs as the result of the kinds of questions asked, the way they are asked or by the people in the sample; for example, a sample that is not a true reflection of your audience.

**Chart (Pie, Bar, Line)** – a visual representation of research findings. Includes Pie (a circle that is divided to reflect the proportions of a total); Bar (compares values over a number of categories); and Line (compares values over a number of categories but more usually over time).

**Closed question** – the respondent selects an answer from a list provided.

**Coding question (or code number)** – each possible closed question answer has a number assigned to it, which is used for data entry.

**Completion mechanism** – the means by which a person participates in a survey.

**Contingency** – allowing some leeway in a plan to accommodate unexpected circumstances, such as additional costs.

**Convenience sampling** – surveys conducted at the place where the target audience gathers, for example, at a performance.

**Cross-tabulation** – tables that compare the information relating to segments within your sample; for example, comparing how younger people vary from older people in terms of interest in the performing arts.

**Data analysis** – interpretation of the information and statistics gathered during research.

**Data entry (or input)** – entering the answers to questions into a computer program.

**Demographic** – social information relating to age, gender, income, marital status, ethnicity, etc.

**Descriptive research** – describes an audience and their characteristics at a particular time.

**Dichotomous question** – the respondent must select from only two choices in response to a question; for example: Are you male or female?

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Double-barrelled question** – two ideas are contained within one question; for example: Do you like the venue and the seating?

**Executive summary** – a brief summary of the key elements, results and recommendations in a research report. Designed so that readers can locate pertinent information quickly.

**Focus group** – moderated discussions within a target audience designed to find out about their attitudes to a defined set of issues.

**Incentive** – benefit offered to encourage a person to participate in a research program.

**In-depth interview** – an interview for research purposes that goes into more depth about a particular issue. Usually consists of a number of open-ended questions and may be flexible in structure.

**Intercept interview** – interview with a person approached on the street or as they leave a performance.

**Introduction script** – agreed wording that a researcher uses to introduce research to a person who is to be interviewed.

**Market intelligence** – information gathered from a range of sources about the marketplace as a whole or about an audience.

**Market segmentation** – the division of the marketplace into specific groups. Examples include double-income-no-kids, empty-nesters (no children at home), young people, retirees, etc.

**Mean** – the average response; for example, the average number of times people attended live theatre in the past 12 months.

**Median** – the mid-point – half of the respondents are above or below a factor such as a particular age bracket.

**Methodology** – the system devised to implement a research program.

**Mode** – the most frequently occurring answer to a question.

**Multiple-choice question** – provides a list of circumstances for respondents to consider with regard to the question asked. The respondent can be asked to select one only, select all that apply, select the most important, or rank the factors in order of importance.

**Net count** – the total number of people who respond in a particular way; for example, the number who ranked a particular experience 'extremely enjoyable' or 'very enjoyable'.

**Neutral or 'mid point' code** – if people are asked to rank an experience on a scale (for example, 1 to 5) the mid-point (3) should allow people to say it was neither/nor (neither bad nor good).

**No-response category** – people who do not answer a question may be put into a category labelled 'no response'.

**Non-attender** – person who has not attended a performance by a particular company.

**On-line survey** – conducted via a website or by email.

**Open-ended question** – does not provide a list of choices for people to select from; respondents are free to respond as they wish.

**Pilot survey** – (in this guide) relates to research conducted by Woolcott Research of selected small to medium performing arts companies in Melbourne.

**Point of sale question** – question asked of a customer when they buy a theatre ticket.

**Potential attender** – person who does not attend currently but is thought to be likely to attend in the future because of interests (such as attending certain types of performance) or demographics.

# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**Predictive research** – provides answers to 'What if?' scenarios; for example, what will happen if we move to a different venue? What will happen if we change the name of the company?

**Primary research** – obtains information from an original source (the target audience) for a specific purpose.

**Qualitative research** – explores how people think or behave, and why. Usually conducted through open-ended questioning, it requires a skilled interviewer or moderator who is trained in interpreting findings.

**Quantitative research** – counts the number of people who behave in certain ways or hold certain attitudes. The attributes must be measurable.

**Quota sampling** – targets are set for completed responses from specific categories of people. Quotas are representative of the known population.

**Random sampling** – everyone has an equal chance of being involved; for example, every third person on the list.

**Recruitment** – in research terms, the process of recruiting people to be part of a research program; usually relates to booking interview times or attendance at a focus group.

**Relative frequency** – the proportion (percentage) of respondents who give a particular response.

**Repeat attendance** – audiences who return to see other performances.

**Representative sample (or unbiased sample)** – reflects the make-up/composition of an audience; not skewed to one particular type of person.

**Respondent** – person who answers questions in a questionnaire.

**Response rate** – responses received as a proportion of the total questionnaires distributed or the total audience that could have completed a questionnaire at a performance.

**Return mechanism** – the means by which a person returns a questionnaire (post, Reply Paid, etc).

**Sample size** – the number of people who complete a questionnaire or participate in a research program.

**Scaled response question** – includes a scale by which a respondent can rate their approval or disapproval, agreement or non-agreement, and so on; for example: extremely enjoyable, very enjoyable, etc.).

**Screener question** – asked at the beginning of the interview to verify that the person belongs to the target audience.

**Secondary research** – conducted by other organisations.

**Self-completion questionnaire** – completed in writing by the person answering the questions.

**Sub-category** – a group of people within the total sample who share certain characteristics, such as age.

**Survey software** – computer program designed for the input of data gathered during audience research.

**Tabulation** – process of creating a table that sets out the data under headings for each column and row.

**Tracking research** – conducted over time to monitor changes in the marketplace such as attitudes to, or support for, a particular company.

**Variations** – changes or differences over time or within sub-categories of data.

**Visual aid** – picture or text used during face-to-face interview or focus group.