

Bigger Impact User Guide: Why, How, and When to Create Impact Statements for Advocacy

General Guidelines

An impact statement is a way to summarize and highlight key information about the ways your organization serves, improves, and affects your visitors, neighborhood, and wider communities. The more targeted/thematic your statement, the more effective it will be in carrying your desired message and supporting your efforts to create change, which is the heart of advocacy.

Impact statements differ from annual reports, appeal letters, grant applications, and similar documents which might already exist in your organization, because of their audience -- elected officials and others in public service. Messages to elected officials are best when they focus on providing those officials and their staff with information they need to do their jobs better, to serve their constituents' needs.

While you can, and should, invite your public officials to your organization, include them in your mailing lists for newsletters and press releases, you should also think carefully about creating materials specifically for this audience.

Key components of any advocacy materials you create:

- *Current* - Museums love history, but out-of-date materials are not helpful to your cause.
- *Contact Information* - Make sure they can follow up with you with further questions!
- *Concise and Concrete* - Legislative staff have limited time and lots of demands on it. Make your point efficiently to be effective.
- *Context* - Tell them why it matters; support your thesis with evidence.
- *Call to Action* - What are you asking from your audience? Make it obvious and don't be afraid to ask.
- *Connection* - This is less about the materials and more about the way you introduce them. Make sure you've done your research to find out what this particular person cares about most deeply. How can you frame what you do and what you need in a way that will catch their attention and align your interests with theirs?

Targets and Themes

Policy makers care about the things that directly affect how bills are written, funded, and executed, as well as the well-being and needs of their constituents. Aligning your institutional priorities with lawmakers' priorities will help you help them and make your message compelling.

This toolkit will provide you with templates, guiding questions, and resources to help you create these four kinds of impact statements: economic, educational, environmental, and equity-centered. Feel free to also use these as inspiration to create your own on other themes that are central to your organization and your advocacy goals.

Identifying the Stories & Finding the Numbers

Advocacy is storytelling with a goal. What are the stories that happen at your organization that advance the cause you're supporting? Emotion is memorable and as compelling as numbers, so use them both.

While you may need to do some additional research, you likely already have access to much of the information you need to create your statements. Look to these sources for existing data you can use, both quantitative and qualitative:

- Annual reports
- Grant reports or granting agencies
- Annual appeals
- Evaluations & feedback forms
- Visitor surveys
- Admissions data

You can also find data about your local community, the broader cultural field, and state and national statistics from sources such as:

- Professional service organizations
- State & local tourism offices
- Mainstreets collaboratives & chambers of commerce
- US Census data

NEMA has assembled a variety of useful resources on our website here:

- Advocacy Organizations by State (<https://nemanet.org/resources/advocacy/organizations/>)
- Advocacy Resource Library (<https://nemanet.org/resources/advocacy/resources/>)
- Green Museums Finding Aid (<https://nemanet.org/resources/advocacy/environmental-resources/>)
- If in your research, you find other resources that are helpful, please submit them for inclusion in our library here: <https://nemanet.org/resources/advocacy/advocacy-submissions/>

Avoiding Number Overload

- Illustrate the numbers with individual experiences, such as powerful quotes from partners or return visitors
- Use comparisons that make sense and are easy to remember (% of budget spent on X program, or cost per person to offer free admission, etc.)

How do I decide what to include?

- Focus on your audience
- Scale your information to what is necessary for your purpose
 - Social media? Overview, eye catching and easy to remember and share
 - Legislative meeting? Detailed, with a call to action
 - Foundation? In depth, results oriented and tailored to funders' requests

Design Tips

- Keep your key information visible, not drowning in text.
- Align with your organization's branding if applicable.
- Use photos, infographics, maps, timelines, etc. for added impact.
- Make sure your call to action and contact information are easy to find for follow-up.

How to Create an Economic Impact Statement

Answer (briefly, with facts & images where possible) these questions:

- Why does your museum matter? How do you let others know it matters?
- What unique services do you provide?
- What would the impact to your community be if the museum closed down?
- With whom do you partner? How does that extend your impact?
- How do your contributions compare to/contribute to the local, state, or national trends?

Numbers that Count

- Direct & Indirect employment
- Benefits to local businesses (restaurants, stores, lodging)
- Payroll taxes etc. paid to the state
- Value of services provided (free admission, student programs, civil services for councils on aging, veterans' services, etc.)
- Admissions costs
- Visitation (by category of visitor or by zip code/legislative district)

Key Resources

- Americans for the Arts - Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 Calculator (<https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/arts-economic-prosperity-5/use/arts-economic-prosperity-5-calculator>)
- AAM's Museums as Economic Engines (<https://www.aam-us.org/2018/01/19/museums-as-economic-engines/>)

How to Create an Educational Impact Statement

Answer (briefly, with facts & images where possible) these questions:

- What holes in curricula are you filling? What do your local students need that you provide?
- What services do you provide to teachers and administrators?
- What critical skills are you supporting?
- What are your flagship programs? (Field trips? Outreach? After school programs? Virtual? College connections? Internships and training opportunities?)
- Do you offer tailored programs for non-traditional students, lifelong learners, senior citizens, English as a Second Language learners, new citizens, visitors with disabilities?
- Who makes up your education team?
- How much of a budget commitment are your educational goals and programs?

Statistics that Talk

- # of students & their ages
- # schools and/or school systems
- # of towns served (pro tip: by congressional district!)
- Free or reduced admission categories and numbers
- Range of visitation from general public (if you collect zip codes)
- Grants or awards received for your educational programs

Key Resources

- AAM's 2021 Report: Museums and Trust (<https://www.aam-us.org/2021/10/05/exploring-museums-and-trust-2021/>)
- The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021 (<https://fordhaminstitute.org/national/research/state-state-standards-civics-and-us-history-2021>)
- The Educational Value of Field Trips (<https://www.educationnext.org/the-educational-value-of-field-trips/>)

How to Create an Environmental Impact Statement

Answer (briefly, with facts & images where possible) these questions:

- How has climate change directly affected your museum, operations & finances?
 - Resilience projects saved money on energy usage, water, insurance, gas/mileage?
 - Lost revenue due to extreme weather closures? Insurance premiums up?
 - Damage to buildings, grounds, collections? Climate control systems?
- How does the operation of your museum impact the environment? (Good or bad)
- What measures is your organization taking to mitigate climate impact?
- What do you need from your elected officials to make resiliency work at your organization more possible/effective? (Including but not limited to funding)

How do I identify, measure, and organize my climate impact?

Use the “Scope 1, 2, and 3” framework to figure out where you fit. You can find out more about the Scope guidelines as well as other assessment tools at NEMA’s Green Museums Finding Aid (<https://nemanet.org/resources/advocacy/environmental-resources/>).

- Scope 1: direct greenhouse gas emissions from museum owned and controlled resources (heating, vehicles, etc), emissions from manufacturing/exhibition creation, etc.
 - These are mitigated by things like solar power, rainwater harvesting, pollinator gardens, pervious paving, tree planting, electric or hybrid vehicles, etc.
- Scope 2: indirect greenhouse gas emissions produced by energy suppliers who create and deliver electricity, steam, heat and cooling
 - These are mitigated by green choices in service providers, investments, etc.
- Scope 3: greenhouse gas emissions related to an organization’s operations, not within its direct control. This involves emissions generated both upstream (by suppliers and so on), and downstream (by users, clients, and customers). In the leisure-time and tourism economies, environmental impacts include getting all those visitors to and from sites, as well as emissions related to goods purchased and/or consumed in shops and restaurants.
 - These are mitigated by education of the visiting public, the offerings on display at concessions, and encouraging behaviors such as using public transportation, etc.

What if it feels like my organization isn’t doing enough for resiliency & sustainability?

- Remember that it’s hard to measure changes in attitudes, values and feelings, but you can work towards these things:
 - Reviewing organizational procedures to be climate-smart
 - Focus on actions/activities rather than worrying about measuring results
 - Think in terms of systems, and where changing the flow can change the endpoint
 - Climate/environment work is also work towards better global health and well-being. Where are you focused on wellness, environmental justice, and equity? These things are all interconnected.

Key Resources and Research

We have assembled (and continue to update) research, resources, tools, and helpful organizations at NEMA’s Green Museums Finding Aid (see link above).

How to Create an Equity-Centered Impact Statement

Answer (briefly, with facts & images where possible) these questions:

- Where does equity fit in your organization's strategy and budget? How are you demonstrating your institutional commitment?
- How accessible are you? What languages are spoken in your neighborhood and how are they reflected in your organization? What are your accommodations for visitors with special needs, physical or otherwise?
- Who are you including at what levels? Board? Advisory groups? Staffing? Community partnerships? Who makes decisions and whose voices are represented? Whose are missing and what are you doing about it? Where are you amplifying the voices of historically marginalized people in the museum field?
- What research have you done to acknowledge the ancestral lands you are on? What partnerships with local indigenous populations are you pursuing?
- What does your organization do that no one else is doing? What community needs are you addressing? How are you contributing to the life of your neighborhood?

Community Context

Think about pairing your org's info with your community background and 'equity spotlight' information for context - why is what you are telling them important?

- Common equity markers: access by public transit; accommodations for visitors with special needs; local cost of living vs. income range; pay ratio on staff (highest to lowest earners, also male to female and racial pay equity)
- Community context (racial/ethnic makeup of neighborhood, age of housing stock, tree cover, % of students who qualify for free or reduced lunches, most common sources of employment in the area, public health indexes for violence, drug issues, covid vaccination rate, number of households with computers, etc.)

What do I do if it feels like my organization isn't doing enough for diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice?

- Remember that it's hard to measure changes in attitudes, values and feelings, but you can work towards these things:
 - Reviewing organizational policies and procedures to be equitable and just
 - Focus on actions/activities rather than worrying about measuring results
 - Think in terms of systems, and where changing the flow can change the endpoint
 - Social justice work is also work towards better global health and well-being. Where are you focused on wellness, environmental justice, and transparency? These things are all interconnected.

Key Resources and Research

- AFTA's Social Impact of the Arts (<https://www.americansforthearts.org/socialimpact>)
- Artists Thrive (<https://artists thrive.org/artist-thrive-resources>)
- Massachusetts Health Equity Dashboard (<https://www.mass.gov/guides/massachusetts-health-equity-dashboard>)
- US Census (also state & local data)



CONTACT INFO | PUBLICATION DATE

YOUR ORGANIZATION

Mission Statement or Relevant Vision/Value Statement

YOUR STRENGTHS AND STORIES IN NUMBERS:

Year-Round Employees,
Seasonal Hires



Reciprocal Benefits/
Mainstreets Partnerships

Geographic range of visitation, attendance stats



\$ Value of (free) services to community & schools, volunteer hours donated, etc.

Direct & Indirect \$ Impact: Taxes, Museum expenses, visitor spending, etc.



MUSEUMS: SMALL BUSINESSES, ECONOMIC KEYSTONES

Why would you be missed? Highlight how you enliven your neighborhood, contribute to prosperity, fill unique role in your 'ecosystem'

- Context: local vs. tourism attendance, spending patterns, research on impact & ROI.
- Services you offer to specific groups (students, military, special needs, immigrants)
- Key programs, partnerships or audience segments (by legislative district where possible!)

"I love the Blank Museum! My whole family looks forward to visiting every year to see what's new. While we're here we eat out, stay in our favorite B&B, and visit other attractions."
- Annual Vacation Visitor, Family of 5

Call to Action: Support our work by voting federal, state, and local funding for cultural orgs, include museums as partners in education bills, share our programs with constituents in need.



FURTHER INFORMATION (ADDRESS, LINK, INVITE TO VISIT)

YOUR INSTITUTION

MISSION STATEMENT OR EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY



*Inspiring pull quote(s) from
a teacher, student, or
member of your education
staff*



Using The Best Numbers to Tell Your Story

**HOW MUCH \$/%
SPENT ON
EDUCATION**

54%

**STUDENTS
VISITING PER
YEAR**

3,800

**TEACHER
TRAINING
PARTICIPANTS**

80

**SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN
PARTNERSHIP
PROGRAMS**

6

EDUCATION PROBLEM WE SOLVE

Here's how we help students and teachers

Do not assume that what is obvious to you is to your audience. Provide context and relevant research wherever possible to show why what you do matters to their constituents.

- Be brief and readable. Avoid long paragraphs.
- Infographics can help (charts, timelines, icons, etc.).
- You are the expert in what you do; your knowledge is worthwhile to those who have to make decisions at the governmental level. Do not be afraid.

BECAUSE STATEMENT

CALL TO ACTION

What you need from them to do your job

- Pick a few concrete asks, which may include:
- Budgetary and/or tax code
- Regulatory
- Site-specific request (grant letter of support, etc.)
- Invite them (and staff) to visit your organization!

YOUR ORGANIZATION & CLIMATE CHANGE

Environmental mission or value statement

Museums are Vulnerable to Climate Change

EXPLAIN THE IMPACTS AND COSTS TO YOUR SITE

- Increased insurance costs for at-risk sites
- Increased operation and capital expenses for mitigation and prevention of new climate impacts including flooding, power outages, and extreme heat
- Destruction of vulnerable historic sites due to storms and sea level rise
- Pest migration endangers collections
- Storm closures impact attendance and revenue

Mitigating Damage Across Our Operations

SCOPE 1, 2, 3, AND EDUCATING OUR VISITORS

- Reducing greenhouse gases with solar panels and planting trees on campus
- Minimizing waste by repurposing green exhibit elements and composting
- Encouraging visitors to take public transit through admissions discounts
- Working with local vendors for stocking gift shop and cafe offerings
- Highlighting sustainability efforts in monthly museum communications
- Recent exhibition on historic data from the collection illustrating local changes to weather and habitats
- Divesting from fossil fuel investments

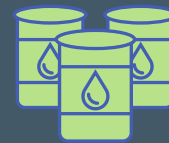
Call to Action

Legislative Partners can help:

- Expand mass transit
- Communicate climate solutions
- Support rebate programs for clean energy equipment
- Advocate for direct pay and grant funding for greening museums
- Build partnerships for creative thinking



Measuring Impact



Rainwater Diverted from Storm Sewer

120 GAL/RAINFALL

Volunteer Hours in Historic Victory Garden

550H / \$18.7K



Hiking Trails Maintained

4.5 MILES

Visitors through Public Transit Program

2,675 IN 2021



\$ Saved through Resilience Projects

\$32K/YEAR

Budget commitment to green initiatives

22% OPERATING / 12.5% STAFF

YOUR ORGANIZATION

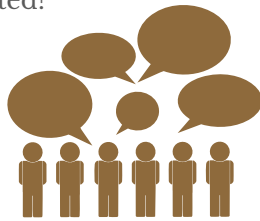
Mission and/or Equity Statement



Showcase Initiatives, with Impact Numbers where Available:

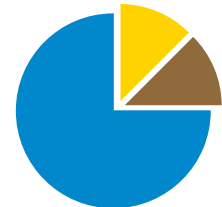
COMMUNITY AUTHORITY

Who are you including at what levels? Board? Advisory groups? Staffing? Community partnerships? Who makes decisions and whose voices are represented?



STRATEGY & BUDGET COMMITMENTS

What are the markers of institutional commitment to your equity and inclusion goals? What is the timeline to reach them?



MINORITY-OWNED BUSINESS PARTNERS

What does your organization do that no one else is doing? What community needs are you addressing? How are you contributing to the life of your neighborhood?

WHOM DO YOU SPEAK TO?

What languages do people in your community speak? Do your staff members speak those languages? What about exhibit labels and key information on your website? How accessible are you, physically and otherwise?

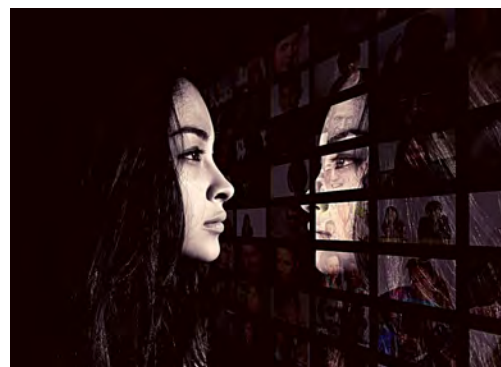


REFLECTING REALITY

What is the context in which your org exists?

Think about pairing your org's info with your community background and 'equity spotlight' information for context - why is what you are telling them important?

- Common equity markers: access by public transit; accommodations for visitors with special needs; local cost of living vs. income range; pay ratio highest:lowest on your payroll.
- community context (racial/ethnic makeup of neighborhood, age of housing stock, tree cover, % of students who qualify for free or reduced lunches, most common sources of employment in the area, public health indexes for violence, drug issues, covid vaccination rate, etc.)



Pick exhibit or visitor images that are respectful and not tokenizing.

CALL TO ACTION

What do you need from your audience to do this better?

- Vote or sponsor this bill which...
- Funding for that set of programs or earmarks
- Visibility for these initiatives
- Share these resources with your constituents