

Team-Based Inquiry

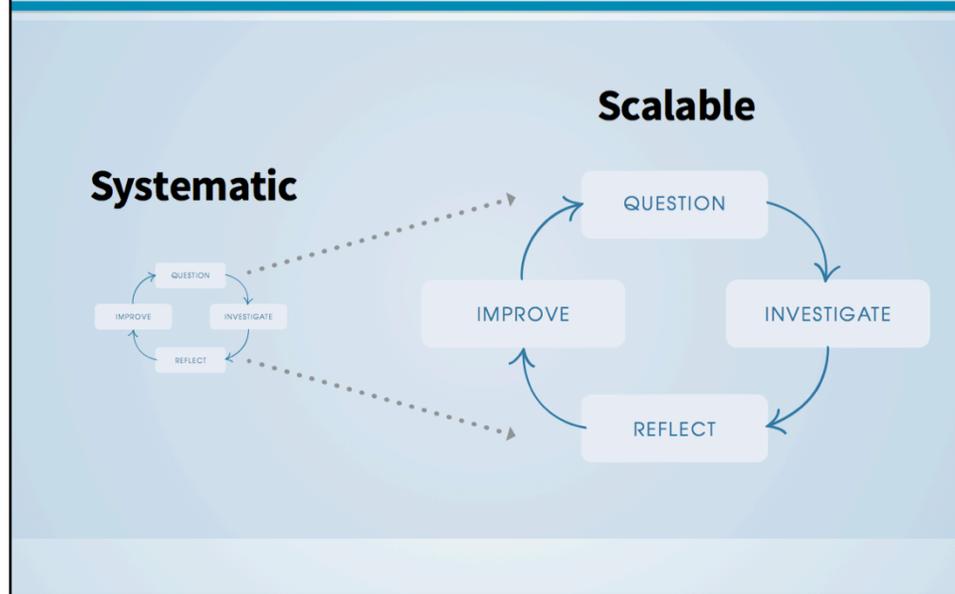
Preparing for TBI



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Welcome to the team-based Inquiry process. Before you start digging into the specifics of each phase of the process, you probably want to make sure you understand what you are getting yourself into and how you should prepare for the process overall.

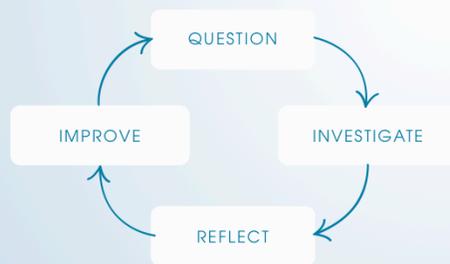
Team-Based Inquiry



Team-Based Inquiry, or TBI, is an evaluation and inquiry process that was developed out of the needs of the Nanoscale Informal Science Education Network. It is a way of thinking about evaluation and a way of working that allows all types of museum professionals to reflect upon and improve their daily practices and the products they create for the public. It was built to be both systematic and scalable, so it can provide you with the data you need to make decisions and take action while also fitting into the constraints of your daily work.

Team-Based Inquiry

An approach to empowering professionals to get the data they need, when they need it, in order to improve their products and practices and create successful educational experiences.



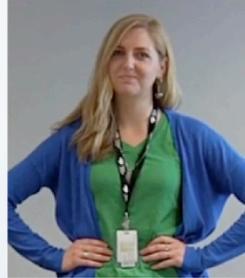
- Systematic
- Led by non-evaluation professionals
- Collaborative and team based
- Small scale and focused
- Embedded in work

Since the TBI process is dedicated to helping you and your team identify improvements or make decisions on how to proceed, you need a project. TBI can be useful for improving exhibits, activities, programs, or other public engagement products. It is also useful for reflecting on how you go about conducting your business, be it team or department meetings, staff or volunteer training sessions, or accounting or hiring practices.

Team-Based Inquiry



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We do not suggest using the TBI process in cases where the stakes are high for how you move forward – employee assessments, grant-related evaluations, or strategic planning decisions are not suited for the TBI process. But anything that resides in the sphere that you consider your “daily work” probably has questions or opportunities for reflection that can be well matched for TBI.

Team-Based Inquiry



The TBI process was purposefully built around teams so that no single individual felt that they were left to navigate the world of evaluation and inquiry alone. And, because the whole point of TBI is to gather information that helps you take action and make improvements, the best way to make sure your TBI study remains useful for you is by embedding it the work that you're doing...every day.*

Build Your Team!



For the TEAM Based Inquiry process to be effective, you need a team! Consider a team of as small as 2 or as large as 10. If you have more than 10 people who want to be on your team, there may be a need to have more than one team, both because the group gets too large to keep moving forward and because that many people suggests that there may be numerous questions to be answered. For your team, think about including people from across the project – leaders, developers, designers, administrators, facilitators, managers, and anybody else. If you are just starting out with TBI, start with creating a team of colleagues who are also interested in going through the process with you. It will be easier to get comfortable using TBI if you are not fighting within the team about whether TBI is worth it. Start small and, if it works for you and your colleagues, grow from there.

Get on the Same Page



Now that you have identified a project and you have a team, you need to make sure you are all on the same page about the project. As a team, talk through everyone's understandings of the project, the professional process, or whatever it is you are hoping to reflect upon. Maybe you already have learning goals for the program you are developing or experiential goals for the exhibition you are building. If you don't, take time now to sit down and talk about everyone's conceptions of the project, what they think the project is about and what a user should take away from it, and anything else important about this specific project that may relate to how each person thinks about, works on, and engages with the project through the TBI study.



Often, products developed by museums have one, two, or three types of goals: the big idea, educational goals, and experiential goals.

- The Big Idea offers the project team a clear focus for how to proceed in developing the project. It provides a simple scope and purpose for the project, as it is a tool for the team and not to describe the project to the public audience.
- Educational goals are those goals that articulate what new knowledge or skills the user will walk away with if they had engaged with the exhibit or program.
- Experiential goals are... just that: whatever you want the visitor to experience. Fun, immersive, engaging, memorable, interactive? You decide!

Often, the educational and experiential goals have been identified by a project team but may not be written down. Before you begin your TBI process, have the TBI team draft these goals and write them up for all to see. There should be consensus around the table as to what those goals are. If there is not consensus, this may be the first TBI question to tackle!

TBI and Project Constraints

While developing the goals and the educational experience, be aware of your project's constraints:

- Available time
- Resources
- Staff



Identify your constraints. How much time do you have to conduct your TBI investigation? How much time do TBI team members have to engage in the study? What resources do you have or not have to see through the TBI process and any potential changes to the project? All of these pieces will help define both what can be studied and how it can be investigated. These constraints automatically set clear boundaries around the study. If you only have 2 days to conduct the study, what you might be able to do and what kind of questions you can answer will be very different than if you had 2 months!

Get going with TBI!

Identify:

- Your team
- Your need
- Your team's assumptions and ideas



As you and your team move through this process, you will build a shared understanding of what you are doing and why, and you will begin to generate buy-in for the entire TBI-process. All of this sets the stage for positive TBI team experience, and it will help ensure you are (stay) on track to providing fantastic experiences for museum visitors.

Take time now to identify a TBI team, identify a need, and get everyone on the same page about what you hope to achieve through conducting a TBI study. Then, check out the next video to begin developing TBI questions. Thanks!



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