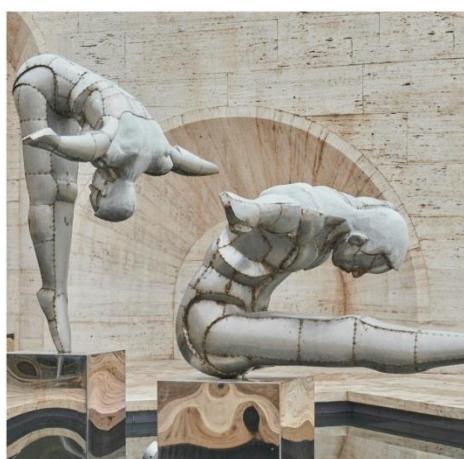# Toolkit for Family Learning

A project inspired by *Museum, Education and Learning* Conference, hosted by Museum Education Centre Armenia, Manchester Art Gallery and the British Museum

Held at the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts and the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute, Yerevan, Armenia
24 - 28 October 2016

Families against War
Toolkit Introduction

In October 2016 colleagues from the British Museum, Manchester Art Gallery and the Museum Education Centre in Armenia hosted the *Museum, Education and Learning Workshop*, held at the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts in Yerevan, Armenia.

Museum professionals from UK Museums, Armenian institutes, and International Training Programme (ITP) Fellows from institutes in Egypt, India, Lebanon and Turkey took part in the workshop. Four project frameworks were created under the following categories:
- Family Learning
- Older Audiences
- Teen Engagement
- New audiences

These projects were created by groups of international museum professionals and will be implemented by museum educators from across Armenian institutions in Yerevan. This toolkit will be an essential resource for each group, providing guidelines and points for discussion for colleagues who are working in different countries but are invested in one project.

The *Families against War* Project group consisted of-

Haykuhi Avagyan - Vanadzor Museums of Fine Arts, Armenia
Ronan Brindley - Manchester Art Gallery, UK
Arusyak Ghazaryan - Yeghishe Charents Museum of Literature, Armenia
Zhanna Manukyan - Martiros Saryan House-Museum, Armenia
Davit Poghosyan - Armenian State Pedagogical University after KH. Abovyan, Armenia
Tatev Saroyan - Museum of Russian Art, Armenia
Shreen Taher - The Children's Museum Cairo, Egypt
Nigel Tallis - The British Museum, UK

The group brief was to create a project which would involve family learning. Each member of the working group had experience of working with families and had witnessed the powerful impact of engaging families in museum and gallery activities. Therefore, the group moved quickly to prioritise the identification of a target audience.

The concept of working with families affected by war emerged early in the group's discussion and came from the Armenian and Egyptian delegate(s). Armenia's recent experiences of conflict and geo-political tensions in border areas are unresolved meaning that the impact of war on individuals and their families is a very live issue. There is also an intergenerational element to this in that conflict over the decades has affected children, parents and grandparents but isn't necessarily discussed. The group felt that museums and galleries should play a role in connecting with these families, providing creative activities that the families could take part in together, and thereby offer a 'neutral' space where families could share stories and experiences. Armenia has a long history of conflict; as such conflict is a recurring theme in museums from objects to Armenian literature. The group member from Egypt envisaged using a similar initiative in her country with the aim of connecting with military families.

The group's discussion and proposal embodies the nature of the workshop, marrying examples of good practice from other countries with local skills, strengths and interests.

The project aims to develop initiatives which create new modes of family learning in museums. Ultimately, it is hoped that these families develop a relationship with the museums and galleries which support them in developing their own coping strategies for dealing with and talking about the experiences they've been through. All the group members agreed that the museums and galleries working on the project would need to bring in and access other professional expertise (therapists / psychologists) to assist the families on their journeys.

Armenian Context - Setting the scene in Armenia

Think about how your context affects your line of work?

There are approximately 120 museums in Armenia, around half of which are in the capital, Yerevan. Although Armenia's museums are concentrated within the capital city, a large amount of the country's registered material and non-material heritage can be found in the surrounding 10 provinces.   Most of the museums in Armenia are non-commercial state organisations run by various ministries and governmental bodies of the Republic of Armenia. A small number of private museums are under the authority of different foundations and non-governmental organisations. Generally museums in Armenia work toward gaining a balance of advocacy and investment from governmental and private bodies to centralise the support of culture whilst involving Armenian citizens and businesses in their heritage.

As a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with it a very specific cultural policy, in recent decades new legislation has emerged on cultural and intangible heritage and policy. This policy is more in-keeping with the interests of the independent state. Discussing Armenian cultural values and creating a precise policy for the citizens of the country is a current topic and a very important point of discussion for museum and heritage professionals in Armenia.

Specific policies regulating the work of museums and the cultural sector in Armenia is a developing area; over-riding goals for new policies within the sector include maintaining and replenishing Armenian cultural heritage, and developing and promoting heritage through a variety of institutions, museums being one of them.

More information can be found via the following links:

Compendium
http://www.culturalpolicies.net/web/countries-quick-facts.php?pcid=1030

Regional Co-operation for Cultural Heritage Development
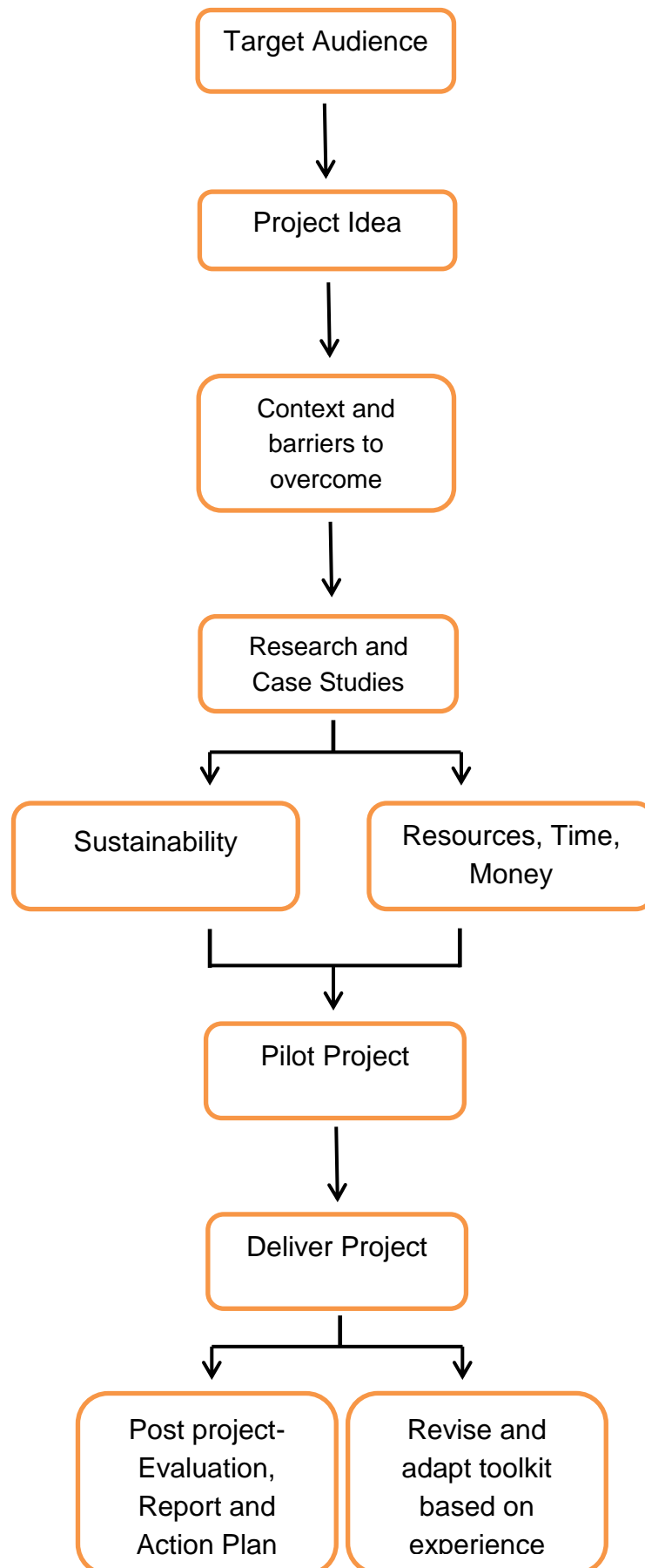http://rcchd.icomos.org.ge/?l=E&m=4-4&JID=2&AID=13

Ministry of Culture for Republic of Armenia
http://mincult.am/hiistory_and_culture_monuments_protection_agency.html

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2. What is the project?

<u>Project scope</u>

Create a project outline that briefly explains your plans.

To gather a group of 10 families who have been involved in and affected by war and maintain their long term involvement in *Families against War*.

Families against War will work with families affected by war through a series of workshops on creative activities within museums and art galleries, to encourage families to communicate and work together. These activities shouldn't relate to their experiences, instead they should be fun, interesting and creative. This will establish confidence and communication between the families that can then encourage communication of the larger issues. The key aspect will be to get families interacting together in the 'neutral' museum and gallery environment.

Outside expertise such as the input of a therapist are critical because some the skills required for this project generally don't exist in museums. Overall the approach is not to confront issues head on rather it is to get families involved in something enjoyable and creative in a non-threatening but visually inspiring environment of a museum / art gallery. Once confidence is achieved by families, sharing other experiences may follow. The pace cannot be forced.

Based on the success of the creative workshops and relationships developed, further discussions can take place in order to develop out comes on a larger and long term scale. A series of educational workshops about the history of conflict in Armenia will be developed for Armenian citizens to take part in. Stories from participants will be collected and documented to up-museum museum archives. Should participants be comfortable, their stories will be recorded as a way of documenting life in Armenia. New objects relating to the themes of the project will be acquired to build upon modern and contemporary collections and a catalogue of objects acquired will be published. A short film will be created including the stories told during the project (if permission is given) and the stories of selected objects. Objects, pictures and the short film will contribute to a temporary exhibition.

3. Your target audience

3.1   <u>Who are the group you are referring to?</u>

Families of all ages affected by war.

<u>What are the interests and needs of the target group?</u>

For any family affected by war, past or current, to find a place where they can address their struggles and have a neutral platform from which to share their experiences.

<u>What are the benefits of targeting this group?</u>

- Why are you working with families involved in war?

To support families affected by war, as both a long standing and current issue, so they can make connections with the museum
To encourage parents and children to communicate by creating and learning together
To raise awareness of the importance of Armenian intangible heritage

- Why now?

The project is the result of a relatively new role that museums in Armenia are playing, to be active in the lives and the current needs of Armenian citizens rather than reflecting on past events. War and conflict is such a dominant theme in museums but while people are suffering now the museum wants to take on a more proactive role, more than sharing stories. This programme hopes to organise a safe space for different generations to interact in, to share their common concerns, fears and struggles.

- What do you hope to achieve?

To design creative activities to get families interacting together in the 'neutral' museum and gallery environment.
To not confront the issues head on but to get families involved in something enjoyable and creative in a non-threatening but visually inspiring environment.
For families to gain confidence and feel comfortable and therefore willing to interact
To use new information to inform future educational programmes, documentation, the collection and exhibitions on the subject of conflict in Armenia.

3.2   <u>Engaging your target audience</u>

<u>What will the museums' relationship be with this audience?</u>

A place to meet
Coordinator of activities
Advocates of the programme
Neutral ground

How might engaging this target audience be difficult and what will you do to counteract these difficulties?

The nature of the topic being discussed requires museum staff to be patient and shape the programme depending on the responses of the families participating.
The success of the programme will largely depend on the success of the initial family activities. To design activities which are appropriate to the target audience thorough research will be required.
Central to the programme is the use of the museum / art gallery as a safe, open and inviting space, therefore museum staff must remain professional and neutral during conversations about politics/war/conflict.

What can your institution offer them?

- Armenian State Pedagogical University after KH, Abovyan

'Chair of Museology of Armenian State Pedagogical University after Kh. Abovyan can provide advisory support during the implementation of the project (research of target audience, planning process and evaluation of each cycle of the activities), as an institution responsible for educating future and current Armenian Museum specialists.

The aims of the program will be hard to achieve; institutions and colleagues invested in this project will need voluntary support, which can be provided by the students of my university currently completing museum based studies.'
Davit Poghosyan, Armenian State Pedagogical University after KH, Abovyan

- Museum of Literature and Art after Yeghishe Charents

'Armenia is a land-locked country resulting in centuries of territorial wars and conflicts. Currently there is a high possibility that tension and war will start any minute. As a result museum content in Armenian literature and art largely focuses on war and conflict.'

Museum of Literature and Art after Yeghishe Charents is one of the biggest cultural centres protecting Armenian literary, theatrical, cinematic and musical heritage from 18th century to present; material includes memoirs, photographs, notes of patriotic songs, documentaries and documents related to war and the military. Therefore the museum would be a suitable location for this special programme to develop from. The museum could also provide professional and technical support during the documentation and filming of the findings of the project.'
Arusyak Ghazaryan, Museum of Literature and Art after Yeghishe Charents

- Martiros Sarian House-Museum

'Martiros Sarian House-Museum is devoted to the life and art of Martiros Sarian (1880-1972). Although Sarian lived throughout WWI, the Armenian Genocide and WWII his art is light, and seeks to emote feelings of optimism and a message of life overcoming death. The museum displays Sarian's art work and letters dedicated to the memory of WWII. As a result the main aim of Martiros Sarian House-Museum will be to engage participants with the idea of spirit and optimism through the artist's work. The museum will begin to create connections with public organizations currently working with families affected by war. In due course staff of the museum will begin work on the project and choose a relevant team (archivist, psychologists, recorder and volunteers) to support the programme. It will be very important to work with a psychologist throughout the project.

It is quite unique that Sarian's granddaughters work in the museum, descendants of Sarian's son who fought in WWII. As a result there is already a connection between staff at the museum, and families who will participate in the project.
Maritos Sarian House-Museum will:-
- create a strong connection with the army families
- present Sarian's art of war period
- build on the already rich archive about war
- publish a catalogue of acquired materials
- organize exhibitions

- collaborate with different museums, public organizations and funds
- organize educational programs for different target groups.'

Zhanna Manukyan, Martiros Sarian House-Museum

- Vanadzor Museum of Fine Arts

'Vanadzor Fine Arts Museum will be able to collect and archive thematic materials and to organize a thematic exhibition through the objects and via meetings with chosen families. Vanadzor Fine Arts Museum can create a film about the project, to include stories of Armenian families, to document Armenian intangible heritage.'

Haykuhi Avagyan, Vanadzor Museum of Fine Arts

Getting them on board - where are your target audience?

The group will work with local providers such as parent groups, charities and kindergartens to make connections with the target groups.

How will you approach your target group?

Museum and galleries on their own generally do not have the ability, the credibility nor the resources to build audience groups themselves- it is better to work with local providers. The need to build partnerships to reach groups is seen as vital. The target audience will be approached by creating partnerships with groups currently representing them in various communities.

How will you maintain your audience's interest?

This can be a challenge but experience has shown that once contact is made with a group, in this case families, and the families are drawn into activities, there's a decent retention rate. The real challenge is getting them across the threshold. Of course, the right approach is needed. Person to person contact is vital, as is the importance of making families feel welcome.

How might maintaining this audience's interest with your project be difficult and what will you do to counteract these difficulties?

Convincing families affected by war to talk about their experiences to people both within and outside of their family, and learning how to approach such a sensitive subject with care and understanding are major hurdles. With the help of external professional support the project hopes that good relationships will develop throughout the programme between museum staff and participants, and that participants will enjoy coming to the museum for the social experience.

Understanding how to make people from outside of the museum feel comfortable once families have joined the project will take time. Therefore, ensuring the creative, learning activity is good should be the initial priority. Research has shown that if the activity is well thought out, creative and interesting to the children in particular, then families will engage.

4. Research

4.1   Who has worked with a similar audience before?

Can you ask experienced colleagues for hints and tips? What can you learn from previous attempts?

Case Studies

Option to seek advice from Shreen Taher (project member from The Children's Museum, Cairo) working on an old Cairo documentation project with a university in France. The project aims to record the experiences of older members of communities in Cairo and to design a family programme based on the results.

Useful documents-

Co-curating with communities, Museum Association

https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/comment/09092015-co-curating-with-communities

Developing and supporting family learning in Museums and Galleries, Niace

http://shop.niace.org.uk/media/catalog/product/F/a/Family-Learning-Museums-Galleries.pdf

Great Big Cornish Gig Project, Help for Heros

http://www.helpforheroes.org.uk/news/posts/2015/may/great-big-cornish-gig-project/

ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM

http://icom.museum/fileadmin/user_upload/pdf/Codes/code_ethics2013_eng.pdf

Making military histories, Museum and Society

https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/museumsociety/documents/volumes/watson-massie

Mind, Body,Spirit, How Museums impact health and wellbeing, University of Leicester

https://lra.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/31690/4/MBS%20Final%20Report.pdf

Museums, Health and Wellbeing, Routledge

https://books.google.co.uk/books?hl=en&lr=&id=gMQFDAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=museums+and+health+AND+WELLBEING&ots=FuEBGzHg8i&sig=YGR5lt71TurTOFo5LRtBcBBTbxc#v=onepage&q=museums%20and%20health%20AND%20WELLBEING&f=false

National Army Museum London

http://www.nam.ac.uk/

The Reggio Emelia Approach to Early Years Education, Learning and Teaching Scotland

http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/images/ReggioAug06_tcm4-393250.pdf

What is the Reggio Emelia Approach? Child Discovery Centre

http://childdiscoverycenter.org/non-traditional-classroom/what-is-the-reggio-emilia-approach/

5. Barriers (Challenges and Risks)

5.1   Physical / Environmental
The need for families to feel comfortable in new surroundings in order to develop a relationship with the Museum

5.2   Sensory
Is the atmosphere relaxed?
Do families feel comfortable?

5.3   Intellectual
Have museum professionals been advised by counsellors / health care professionals?
To research appropriate creative activities, the success of which will determine the outcomes of the project

5.4   Cultural
Do families believe that a museum or gallery is a place to talk about personal and sensitive issues?

5.5   Attitudinal
Attitudes towards expressing emotion and talking about the past:
Will generational divides limit how much information people are willing to divulge?
Do parents / grandparents want their children / grandchildren to hear personal and distressing stories?
Will families be worried divulging sensitive information will change relationships?

5.6   Financial
Getting support from governmental bodies

5.7   Technological
Recording a film that will have longevity in an age of constantly changing technology

5.8   Other?
Time
The pace of the programme must be determined by the behaviour of the participants

6. Resources

6.1 People

Museums will lead the project and from within this sector there will be a leader, a coordinator and a group of curators from different museums. Museum staff will be assisted by a core team of:

- Archivists
- Recorder
- Volunteers
- Counsellors

The project will take inspiration from research from academics in universities and teaching institutions specialising in pedagogy, teacher training, childcare, kindergartens and parents and children.

Museums will work in partnership with:

- Ministries of culture and protection
- Organisations who work with families who are effected by war
- Armenian ministry of defence

6.2 Time

Families against War will be an annual programme.

- Preparation:-

Building relationships with local partners to find families willing to take part in the project
Marketing in the Armenian Media to appeal to families and to explain the importance of Armenian cultural intangible heritage
Sourcing external partners to work on the project
Research into appropriate creative activities

- Within one year of project beginning:-

To develop a series of educational workshops
To record the stories of *Families against War* participants
To create a short film including stories of *Families against War* participants and relevant objects
To open a temporary exhibition about conflict in Armenia with input from participants- displaying stories, images and personal possessions of families

6.3 Money

Costs-

Activity materials
External staffing- psychologist
Exhibition materials
Cost of film

<u>Income-</u>

Approach Ministries of Culture and Protection to provide grants

<u>Sourcing the funding-</u>

AREG: Funds and Charitable Organisations
http://areg.biz/ca/?lng=am&cid=26&o=0

Beeline Armenia
https://beeline.am/am/?lang=hy

British Council in Armenia
http://www.britishcouncil.am/en

Creative Europe
https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/

Culture and Creativity: EU- Eastern Partnership Programme
https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/opportunities

Embassy: International Organisations in Armenia (links)
http://www.embassy.am/international-organizations-in-armenia

Gagik Tsarukyan Charity Foundation
http://tsarukyanfound.am/eng/

Ministry of Defence
http://www.mil.am/

Ministry of Culture for Republic of Armenia
http://www.mincult.am/

Ministry of Education and Science
http://www.edu.am/

Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
http://www.msy.am/

Open Society Foundations
https://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/about/offices-foundations/open-society-foundations-armenia

Pyunik Human Resources Development Foundation
http://himnadram.am/en/

State Urban Development Committee
http://minurban.am/am/

vhs: DVV International
http://www.dvv-international.am/

VivaCell-MTS
http://mts.am/en/company

Yerevan Municipality: Embassies
https://www.yerevan.am/en/embassies/

Youth Foundation of Armenia
http://heh.am/?lang=en

7 Sustainability

7.1 __Outcomes__

Social Outcomes:

To change the way Armenians see the role of museums
Museum feels like a safe space
To create a sense of community / togetherness and optimism
To raise awareness about struggles within Armenian Communities
To inform younger generations
To raise awareness about the importance of intangible heritage and the importance of
documenting it

Museum Outcomes:

Updated archives
A short film
An exhibition
An educational programme
Acquisition of objects
Catalogue of acquired objects

7.2 __Legacy__

To change the way Armenians feel about and use Museums
New members of the museum community - to create a contact list and offer members of this
project the opportunity to participate in other museum public programs
To repeat the project annually
Updated Museum and Archive records
The programme can be used by museums in other countries
Updated and enhanced toolkit

8 Evaluation and Analysis

8.1   Evaluation

To send out a survey to families and colleagues involved
To send out the survey during the final week on the programme and to ask for the survey to be filled in within a 2 week deadline, to ensure all surveys are completed while the programme is fresh in people's memory
Include a section where families and colleagues can write about their experience, this is a good way of collecting quotes about what the project has done for people

8.2   Analysis

To look at the feedback in the evaluation forms
To decide what worked and what could be improved the following year
To make your project sustainable

9 Report

To write a report detailing what you did, why and what the outcomes were
Include quotes from the evaluation survey, it is important and sometimes more interesting to hear from the participants of your project
Ask colleagues to contribute to the report, explaining their role in the project
Ensure that completing the report is a priority, regardless of new projects

10 Checklist

<u>Project Preparation</u>

☐ Project scope created

☐ Aims and objectives of project understood, including legacy and sustainability

☐ How will the project be funded?
Initiate appropriate conversations internally and externally

☐ Research and learn from projects targeting similar audiences
Use web links provided also

☐ Research how best to advertise opportunities, to enable as many people as possible to access the opportunity

☐ Team structure decided and members aware of responsibilities

☐ Set dates in advance for regular meetings with colleagues

☐ Create a timescale and set deadlines for preparation and implementation of project

☐ Identify risks and challenges

☐ Opportunity advertised

☐ Participants selected

☐ Applicants informed of decisions

☐ Appropriate information sent out to participants

☐ Organise a meeting before project begins to start informal chat with participants about what they want from the project and to 'break the ice'

☐ Evaluation survey written

<u>During Project</u>

☐ Measure success and make notes throughout project

☐ Take Pictures throughout the project

☐ Evaluations distributed

Post Project

☐ Evaluations returned

☐ Evaluation Meeting

☐ Analysis of evaluations and lesson learnt

☐ Write Report- think about output, outcomes and legacy

☐ Publish Report and distribute to all departments in participating institutions

☐ Update and enhance the toolkit

☐ Focus on sustainability- maintain contact with colleagues and participants