



MARCH 2020

TEDX BRAYFORD POOL

THREE-YEAR EVALUATION
AND SOCIAL RETURN ON
INVESTMENT REPORT

TED^x
BrayfordPool
x = independently organized TED event

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ABOUT TEDXBRAYFORD POOL

A TEDx event is a local gathering where live TED-like talks and videos previously recorded at TED conferences are shared with the community. TEDx events are fully planned and coordinated independently, on a community-by-community basis by unpaid volunteers. The content and design of each TEDx event is unique and developed independently, but all of them have features in common.

TEDxBrayfordPool has been going since 2017. The inaugural event was titled "Past. Present. Future"

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LIST OF TEDXBRAYFORDPOOL EVENTS

TEDxBrayfordPool

2017: Past.Present.Future.

2018: Fearless

2019: Re:Think

TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool

2017: Creating Our Future

2018: State of Flux

2019: Being Human

TEDxBrayfordPoolWomen

2018: Showing up

2019: Bold and Brilliant

TEDxBrayfordPoolSalon

METHODOLOGY

The evaluation is based on qualitative data gathered from interviews with stakeholders: speakers, audience members, volunteers, and sponsors of the event.

Thematic Analysis Was Used

What this means is that what is being reported on are **overarching trends within the interviews**. The report does not include any individual person's opinions or views, but rather, comments and questions that were raised by the participants as a whole.

Specific quotations have been included because they were representative of the theme as a whole - not because they represented any one person's opinion.

Social Return on Investment

Social Return on Investment is a model that places stakeholders in the centre of an evaluation exercise. It is not meant to replace other methods of evaluation and data gathering; it is not meant to place exact financial figures on an outcome; and it is not about imposing a pre-determined view of what value is on a group of stakeholders.

The principles of Social Value are "to increase equality, improve well being, and increase environmental sustainability". It's a way to provide a fuller picture of return on investment.

The Reader is encouraged to bear the above-mentioned disclaimers into mind as they peruse this report. To do otherwise would be to misrepresent the findings of this evaluation, and a breach the spirit in which the participants' testimonies were given.

Sample :

Nineteen individuals closely connected to the event were contacted for a telephone interview. Thirteen of those individuals responded and thirteen of them spoke to LORIC. That sample consisted of speakers, volunteers, and sponsors of the event. Additional data taken into consideration was feedback gathered between 2018 and 2019 from all events.

Glossary of terms:

Intended Consequences – The direct impact of an intervention, product, or service, for example: “If you participate in this event, you will receive training and your talk will be broadcast to millions on YouTube”.

Unintended Positive Consequences – The indirect positive impact of an intervention, product, or service. Unintended positive consequences occur without the stakeholders planning for or expecting them. For example: “I did not expect to get business as a result of the talk, but I have since gotten a contract or a book deal or a job off the back of it”.

Unintended Negative Consequences – The indirect negative impact of an intervention, product or service. Unintended negative consequences are usually not planned for by the stakeholders, but can occur anyway. For example: “I did not expect to be so stressed out by this but I was”.

Proxy Values – Monetary values attributed to each intended and unintended consequence for the sake of a social return on investment. For example, if a participant got skills and experience as a result of participating in TEDx, the proxy value for those skills and experience would be the equivalent market value of such training, or £6,000.

Once again, it is worth reiterating that Social Return on Investment is about calculating opportunity gains. The aims of this report are to find exactly what the impacts are and what the Social Return on Investment is.

Each proxy value is given a different weight in the final calculation. Weighing is determined by several factors, including, but not limited to: whether the value is attributed to a direct or indirect consequence, whether the stakeholder is a direct or indirect one, whether there was any drop-off (stakeholder did not finish the program) or attribution (consequence would have happened regardless of the intervention or not). The more weighing a proxy value is given, the higher percentage is given to it in the final SROI calculation. For example, experience and skills for speakers are a highly weighted proxy and so would be reduced by about 10% to account for any other factors that might impact the veracity of the calculation. On the other hand, the event has a very limited impact on the visitor economy, and thus would only be able to take credit for 0.001% of that proxy value, if at all. Meanwhile, an example of a negative proxy could be that 10% of the audience always seems dissatisfied and feels like the cost of the ticket was a waste of money.

An example SROI calculation could be:

61 speakers * £6,000 training each * .9 weighing = £329,400 worth of impact on skills.

3 years of events * £1,300,000,000 gross added value of tourism per region * .00001 weighing = £39,000 value added to the region.

500 delegates * £50 a ticket * .1 weighing = £2,500 value lost for audiences across the three years.

It is assumed that each TEDx event costs £8,000 to run and each of the smaller ones costs £6,000 to run. With sundry costs and the cost of salons, that adds to a budget of £60,000 over the last 3 years.

$$(\pounds329,400 + \pounds39,000 - 2,500) / \pounds60,000 = \pounds6.09$$

So, for every £1 invested in the event, there is a £6.09 return in terms of skills and impact on the visitor economy.

OVERARCHING CONTEXT

Greater Lincolnshire is a county in the East Midlands in England. As an economic region, it is classified as "transitional", meaning that it has what it takes to grow and develop, but it has not yet reached its complete potential.

Open data (available from NOMIS, ONS, and the Lincolnshire Research Observatory) shows that some of the main struggles for the region are:

- Low aspiration among younger people
- Low employment
- Increasingly large share of the population consists of elderly people
- with poor access to entertainment and support
- Rural loneliness
- Poor achievement
- Migration to bigger, more prosperous regions

Despite the presence of two universities in Lincoln and multiple colleges across the county, nearly 2/3rds of the population has a Level 3 Qualification as their highest academic achievement. There is a large self-employed population, but only a small percentage of them are entrepreneurs, suggesting that zero-hours and contract work is more than a little prevalent. Indeed, in Greater Lincolnshire, female entrepreneurs were so few, the official recording from NOMIS anonymised the number.

HEADLINE INFORMATION



1:25

Social Return on
Investment over for the
lifetime of the events.



£329K

Market worth of
training delivered to
speakers.



£5,000

Worth of marketing
delivered to each
sponsor and speaker
every year at a
minimum.

GENERAL SUMMARY

- Fantastic leadership.
- Agile and quick to address problems.
- Speakers felt cared for and supported.
- Speakers inevitably got something out of the event, but the least experienced ones got the most out of the program.
- Sponsors felt like they got great return on investment for a relatively low sum.
- Sponsors felt like the event was in line with who they were and what they wanted to do as far as CSR went.
- There seems to be a very good relationships with existing sponsors. Sponsors who have been speakers reported that they were happy to continue financially supporting the event.
- Sponsors also felt that the last change in the sponsorship model was good as it allowed them access to even more high quality events.
- Everyone wants the event to keep getting bigger and better.
- Everyone feels like the event has the potential to become even more diverse and inclusive.
- Most interviewees were accepting of the fact that the event will experience growing pains along the way – the fact that the organising team has been quick to respond and make changes after each event is seen as encouraging.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES



**What the TEDxBrayfordPool
Events stand for in the minds
of the interviewees and the
audience.**

Leadership, empowerment, and a strong brand.

THE BRAND

The TEDx brand was mentioned several times in the interview as a key asset, not just for the audiences, but also for sponsors, volunteers, and speakers. The TEDx brand was perceived as a symbol for quality and as a guarantee for a good experience, and so it was an honour and a challenge for the team to put on events that were a compliment to it, year on year. There was strong awareness of the brand and what it stands for among speakers, sponsors, and volunteers, as evidenced by the repeated use of the TED slogan (Ideas Worth Spreading) during all interviews.

Marketing and marketing budgets were topics that were raised across all interviews as something the event needed to do more of. However, it is worth noting that among sponsors, the attitude tended to be that all such endeavours will go through a growing process and as such will have their ups and downs until they find the right mix that works for them. All interviewees agreed that attracting more support to the event from local business would be a good outcome and would help showcase the good work the team was already doing.

The TEDxBrayfordPool brand in particular is still growing and re-inventing itself. However, some of the most common themes raised in the interviews were that no matter the event, sponsors got a good return on their investment, while speakers could count on being treated with respect and dignity. The latter in particular was attributed to the leadership of the event and how speakers from diverse backgrounds were supported in their journey from application to stage.

There were multiple volunteers who talked about the TEDx brand as being at the heart of what they do, and maintaining that brand's integrity was something they took very seriously. Several volunteers talked about the balance they had to strike between the needs of the speakers, the needs of the sponsors, and the requirements of the license. However, interviewees agreed unanimously that this was worth it because being part of the bigger TEDx legacy is a significant compliment to Lincoln and Lincolnshire.

It is worth noting here that many of the sponsors and speakers consider the event to already be a fantastic local asset, and is already "a stage for local innovation and interest" that will only grow from there on. One large reason for that is the leadership of the event.

THE LEADERSHIP

“Andy is an asset [...] He is the reason we get applications.”

Volunteer and speaker

“[I] trusted Andy instinctively and was more open to the idea than [I] would usually be.”

Speaker

“Andy is a force of nature.”

Speaker and sponsor

While interviewees had differing opinions on the parts of the event that should change and the parts of the event that should stay the same, the leadership of TEDxBrayfordPool was universally cited as one of the biggest strengths of the event. Speakers who reported as having “never dreamt of doing it” were encouraged and supported to apply by the team, and by Andy in particular. Moreover, many of the speakers credited Andy as having helped them prepare for the talk during emotionally difficult and professionally challenging moments of their lives.

Many of the interviewees acknowledged, in fact, that it was the support of the leadership that empowered them to be part of TEDxBrayfordPool. For the speakers, that was being able to stand on stage and deliver talks on topics that were very important to them, personally and professionally.

For sponsors, it was crucial that the leadership of the event encouraged people to get involved and work well. And for volunteers – curators, coaches, technical leads – it was the leadership that helped them band together to deliver an event, sometimes under stressful circumstances.

Moreover, the leadership of the event was credited as having people return to it year on year. The sponsors who were interviewed often renewed their support year on year. Those who did not renew their support cited becoming speakers as the reason – and there were those who, after having spoken on the stage renewed their sponsorship again for the year after. Speakers talked of feeling tremendous gratitude for the support they had received, and many reported getting involved later as volunteers for the event.

In other words, while the TEDx brand often drew people to the event, it was the leadership that made them stay on and become more involved with each passing year.



SPEAKER EMPOWERMENT

Some of the most commonly expressed directions for growth was for the TEDxBrayfordPool events to become even more diverse and inclusive. Interviewees who identified as volunteers stated a strong desire to see more people from under-represented groups on the main TEDx stage, as well as seeing more things being put into place to support diverse audiences.

However, that is not to say that the TEDxBrayfordPool events are currently suffering from lack of diversity at the moment: indeed, one of the most common pieces of audience feedback from the 2019 TEDxBrayfordPool Women event pertained to how diverse the speaker line-up was. The question of diversity and equality is tied in with the strength of the leadership because a common theme from the interviews was empowerment.

Many of the speakers from diverse backgrounds talked about how the team made them feel safe and supported as they told their stories. As such, it is worth noting that the event team has the tools to build and maintain trust, as well as to continue empowering diverse speakers to tell their stories.

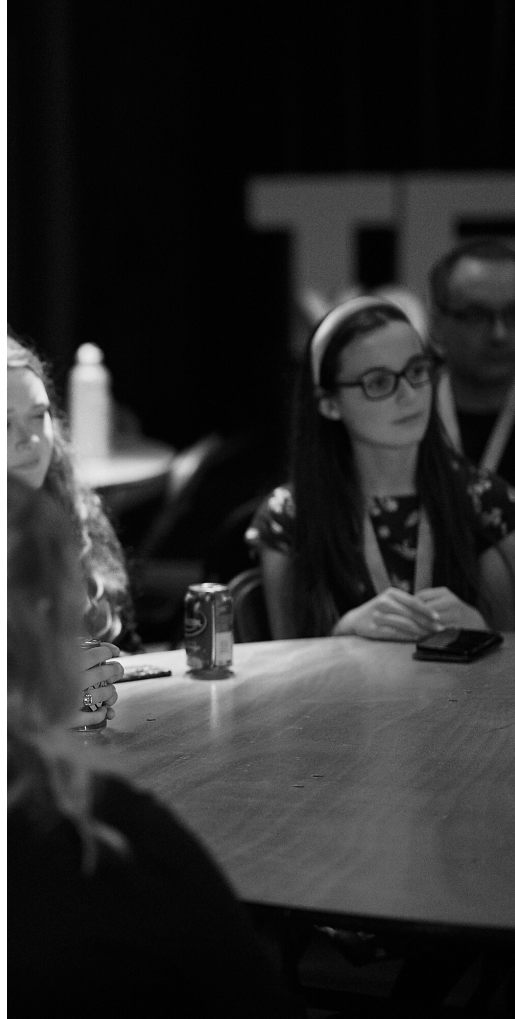
TEDXBRAYFORDPOOL

The feedback regarding the headline event was on the whole very positive. It is evident from the interviews that year-on-year, the team has been listening to the concerns raised by the audiences and speakers, and have been working hard to learn from their mistakes. What negative feedback was relayed concerned an event where there were multiple problems with the A/V, which were addressed the following year. Most of the interviewees who talked about that particular event were quick to point out that the organising team worked hard to make the experience for the speakers and audience fantastic.

Both sponsors and speakers reported seeing significant returns on their investment due to their participation. This will be discussed in greater detail in the second part of the report, however, it is worth noting that these two main stakeholder groups saw the event as having massively helped them from a professional standpoint. Examples of how the event has positively impacted speakers and sponsors include: new business opportunities, improving the company's own brand, supporting Corporate Social Responsibility goals, and helping them find work. Even speakers who had prior experience in giving presentations reported having gained something from the experience, be it job opportunities or just new skills.

“TEDx should be on everyone’s bucket list.”

Volunteer, speaker and sponsor



MOVING FORWARD

More than one of the volunteers interviewed raised concerns that the close affiliation with the universities created the impression that the event was only for academics. Volunteers in particular got the impression that locals to Lincolnshire perceived the event as “not for them”.

Suggestions made

- Prioritising applications of speakers from disadvantaged or underrepresented backgrounds.
- Providing an interpreter.
- Moving away from holding the event at universities.
- Making more of an effort to bring members of the community together.
- Looking into livestreaming licenses to broaden the event’s reach.
- Creating more opportunities for the audience and sponsors to interact with the speakers.
- Scheduling more time for dress rehearsals and technical tests as part of the preparation for the event.

TEDXBRAYFORDPOOLWOMEN AND TEDXYOUTH@BRAYFORDPOOL

The specialist events also received very good feedback from speakers and sponsors. The audience feedback in particular appeared more positive than about the headline event, although it is worth noting that the volume of responses were smaller.

As with the headline event, the speakers reported an overwhelmingly positive experience from having participated in the events. Speakers from the TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool event in particular felt that they had gotten the opportunity to explore whole new sides of their subjects and felt like they gained significant life skills as a result of their participation. Speakers from the TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool events also reported feeling empowered to explore their stories in more meaningful ways than before as a result of participating in the event.

Sponsors of the event mentioned in interview that the new sponsorship packages were a very good value for money as they allowed them access to more and diverse audiences. Indeed, the diversity of the events and the high quality of the presentations were one of the most commented-upon things from audiences as well.

Concerns raised

Some interviewees questioned whether the speakers at the TEDxBrayfordPoolWomen and TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool events might not have gotten more from being in the Headline event rather than the specialist one. Interviewees felt that there was a difference in the experiences of the Headline event versus the TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool and TEDxBrayfordPoolWomen, in terms of both scope and audience size. There were also concerns raised that the Women's event in particular was only attracting applications for talks about trauma and mental health. This, the interviewees felt, was harming the brand in the long run.

Suggestions made

- Finding ways of including younger speakers into the Headline event.
- Encouraging more applications from speakers from the corporate/business world.
- Diversifying the line-up of topics for the events.
- Creating a more professional, corporate feel for the TEDxBrayfordPoolWomen event in particular.
- Introducing auditioning for the TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool and TEDxBrayfordPoolWomen event (again) and being stricter about curating them.



SALONS

The interviewees who talked about the TEDxBrayfordPoolSalons that were run by the events team felt that there should be more of them. This view was congruent with audience feedback, which was consistently positive across the 17 events for which feedback was given. Many audience members expressed that their experiences of attending the salons had been very positive, and negative feedback and suggestions appear to have been consistently taken onboard and addressed from event to event.

Audience feedback also reinforced the findings that the volunteer team at TEDxBrayfordPool is well-equipped to moderate conversations about difficult topics. More than one audience member commented on how the salon leads managed conversations about sensitive and controversial topics. Audience members also reported enjoying the discussions and how the format enabled them to explore new ideas.

Furthermore, the salons appear to be the most successful format to enable audience members to network and share ideas. One piece of feedback that appeared consistently about the salons, but not about the other events, was that audience members were able to find good contacts and increase the visibility of their own companies. Salons, therefore, appear to be an opportunity for TEDx to both nurture existing business relationships, as well as foster new ones.

Before moving onto the section focusing on Social Return on Investment, it is worth taking a moment to discuss the cost of digital marketing.

Typically, the cost of digital marketing on venues like YouTube is calculated using a Cost Per Thousand Impressions, or a CPM metric. That metric is derived by dividing the total views expected from a video by a thousand, and then dividing the cost of a campaign by that number. So, if a YouTube channel typically gets one million views per video, and an advertiser is willing to pay them £10,000 to show ads on their videos, the advertiser's CPM would be £10 per thousand views.

The channel which uploads the TEDxBrayfordPool talks, which is the official TEDx Talks, has 23.7 million subscribers on YouTube, a lifetime view count of over 4 billion, and gains about 3 million new views every day, according to the data analytics site Social Blade. CPM for the channel can start at \$0.25 and go up to \$4.00 per thousand views (or £0.21 to £3.39). What this means is that sponsors and speakers get exposure that could easily have cost them between £5,000 and £80,000 had they been paying market rate for it. This is without any additional marketing costs across multiple social media channels, Search Engine Optimisation, and traditional marketing costs.

This is important to note because there are a lot of misconceptions about social media marketing that skew what is expected on the part of advertisers and event sponsors. Understanding what is and is not expected, what the minimum thresholds are for sponsors and sponsorships, and what the market value are, helps to set expectations for marketers and audiences. TEDx Talks is an A-grade channel, ranked 1st in the Non-profit category, and some of its top ranked videos get between 2 and 35 million views each. As such, it is easily able to request top value for its content – this places unique constraints and opportunities for volunteers, speakers, audiences, and sponsors.

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Impact of the event on all stakeholder groups, intended and unintended consequences, and final suggestions.

When looking at the Social Return on Investment of a project or an intervention, there are four main questions that need to be examined:

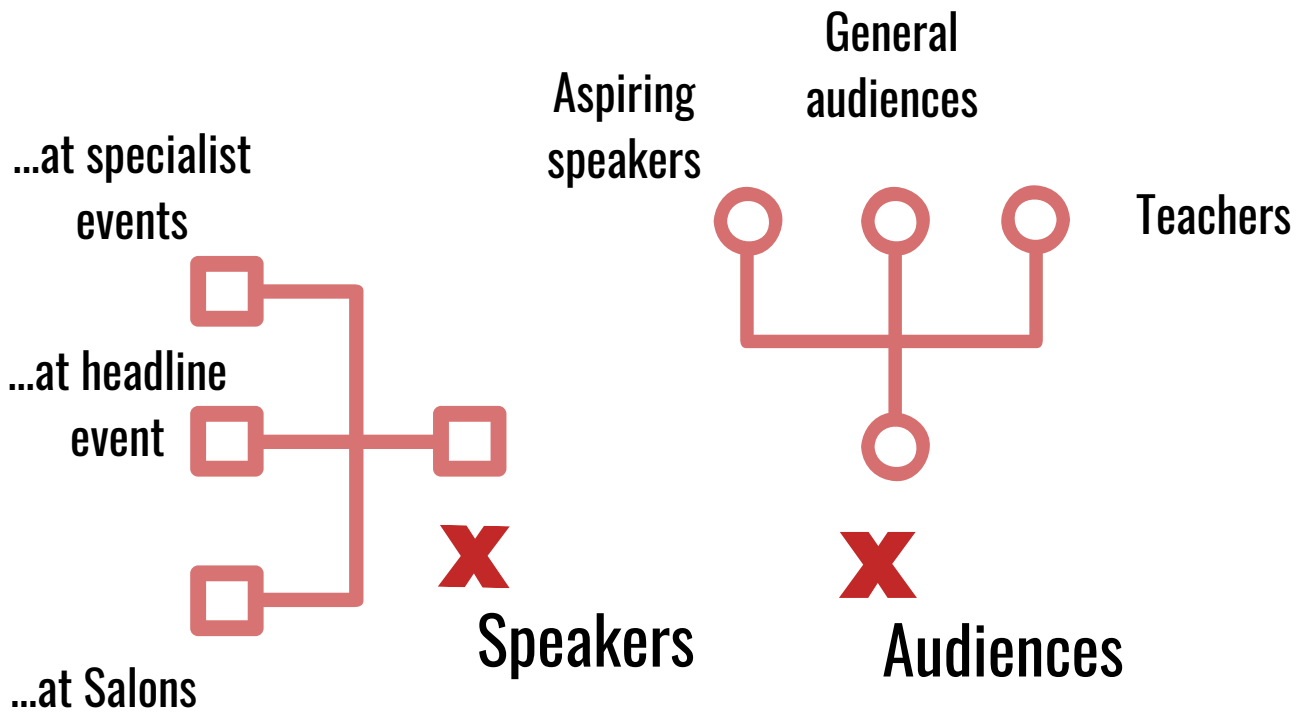
1. Who changes?
2. In what way do they change?
3. How do we know they changed?
4. How much of that change is due to the intervention or project?

In the case of the TEDxBrayfordPool events, the causal relationship is the most obvious with four main stakeholder groups: Audiences, Speakers, Volunteers, and Sponsors. All four groups are directly contributing to the events, and all four groups are subsequently changed by it. However, that is not to say that the wider community does not benefit from the event – speakers who were able to find work or advance professionally as a result of participating were able to increase their contribution to the local economy; sponsors who were looking for a good marketing investment found themselves boosting their companies' overall CSR strategy; and the visitor economy of the city of Lincoln is also a beneficiary of having the TEDxBrayfordPool events hosted locally because of the brand association. All these stakeholders and more will be taken into account in the final Social Return on Investment scoring.

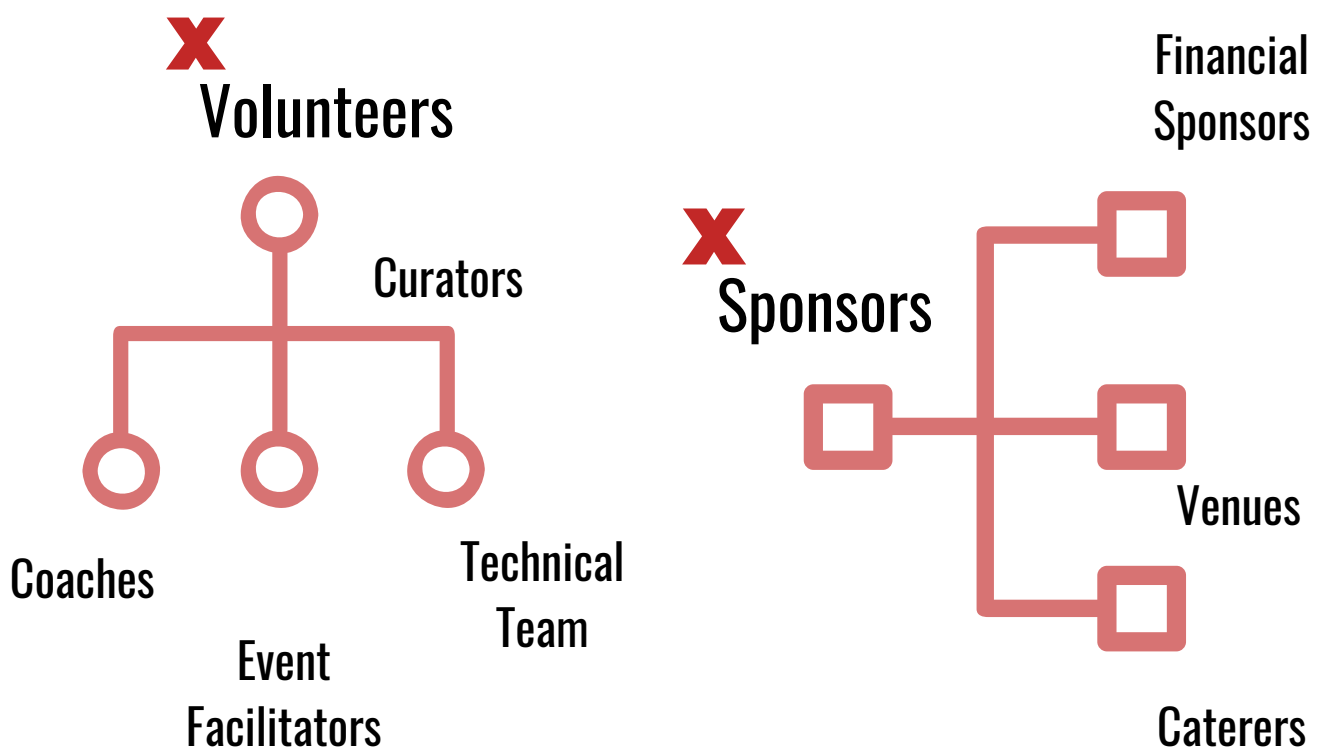
Most of the reported ways in which stakeholders changed as a result of the TEDxBrayfordPool events were positive. Impacts ranged from group to group, but the most common ones pertained to personal fulfilment, prestige, increased confidence, brand improvement, obtaining new opportunities, and supporting others along the way. More on those impacts will be discussed in each separate section, as well as how they were weighed up in the final assessment.

The data collected for this report was obtained post-fact, in some cases years after the initial event took place. While that did not allow for the researchers to measure changes over time, it offered an opportunity to measure long-term as well as short-term impacts. Some of the interviewees had been part of the very first event in 2017 and as such they were able to report on how the event had impacted them years on, and also on whether their previous concerns about “the afterlife of the talk” were fulfilled.

In that same vein, the format of the research allowed participants to directly report on what they felt the impact of the event was to them, and they were able to reflect about the degree to which the outcomes of the event would have occurred on their own. Some speakers, for example, credited their participation in TEDxBrayfordPool as being the catalyst for personal and professional advancement; others– not so much. This has been taken into account in the final weighing, but what is relevant to Social Return on Investment in particular is that the participants were able to talk about demonstrable impacts, not hypothetical ones.



Stakeholder Map



VOLUNTEERS: "IT IS A PLEASURE AND AN HONOUR [TO BE INVOLVED]"

The impact for volunteers has been measured using the interview data. For the purposes of this report, the word volunteers include curators, event managers, coaches, event facilitators, and technical support staff.

Volunteers got involved in the event for a variety of reasons, but the most commonly cited ones were a desire to be part of the event, supporting speakers, and giving audiences a chance to really experience TEDxBrayfordPool as it was intended.

The intended consequences were therefore pride and a sense of personal achievement for being part of the TEDxBrayfordPool story. For many volunteers, it was also an opportunity to give back to the event as many volunteers are also former speakers, or people who use TED talks as a resource in their professional life.

However, there are also unintended positive consequences for the volunteers getting involved is professional development – particularly for those with little to no previous experience in delivering large-scale events. The process of curating and coaching individuals for the stage at TEDxBrayfordPool is also an opportunity for the more accomplished volunteers to enhance their own personal brand.

Many volunteers are skilled professionals in their own right and their involvement in the event necessitates them actively networking with others.

Volunteer-related direct proxies

Cost of networking, cost of world experience for younger volunteers. These proxies were given a high weighing as it is the intended consequence and the impact is more easily proven.

Volunteer-related indirect proxies

Cost of therapy, cost of professional marketing. These were given a lower weighing as it is an unintended consequence and the impact is harder to prove.

AUDIENCES

Over 500 delegates attended the TEDxBrayfordPool events over the last three years, according to the internal data.

For audiences, the stated reasons they attended was a love of the subject, the search of knowledge, wanting the experience the TEDx brand in their city. A lot of audience members reported being familiar with other TEDx events or having watched TED talks online before, and thus wanted to experience the real thing.

Volunteers also reported that a lot of audience members were family and friends of speakers and were there to support as well as to learn. For the audience, therefore, intended consequences revolved primarily around getting a good experience.

In addition to those, there were also the unintended outcomes – both positive and negative. On the positive side, there were a number of audience members who were inspired to participate because they had an idea or a story they wanted to share. There were also audience members who were inspired to become volunteers for the event or sponsors. As such, one of the unintended positive consequences of the event was that influence on audiences to become more involved in the running of the event and contributing to their communities.

As with all events where motivational speaking was involved, however, there is always a chance that an audience member might not be comfortable with the subject matter, or feel distressed by a topic. Volunteers who talked specifically about impact on audiences expressed concern that some talks at the event might leave audiences feeling upset.

Audience-related direct proxies

Cost of a ticket, cost of a meal, cost of a night out.

Audience-related indirect proxies

Cost of lost time.

SPEAKERS

Across 3 years, TEDxBrayfordPool has had 61 speakers across 8 main events. It has also showcased a multitude of other TED and TEDx talks over its 17 salons. For speakers, the most commonly cited reason for getting involved is the opportunity to achieve a personal goal or to push outside of their comfort zone. For many of the less experienced speakers, being involved in this event was the first time they were on any professional stage, and even for the more experienced ones, it was reported that delivering their TED talk was a challenging new opportunity for them.

Impacts varied depending on the level of training and previous experience the speakers had, as that influenced how much value they reported getting from the coaching programme. Less experienced speakers, particularly in the TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool event, reported learning a lot about presentation skills, research, storyboarding, and also speaking to a camera, and seeing their confidence levels and skills develop at an accelerated pace as a result of that. More experienced speakers, for their part, felt that their main challenge was related to creating a talk that fit a format that was unfamiliar to them until that point. As such, the intended consequences for speakers were very much related to achieving their personal goals and picking up new skills along the way. Every speaker interviewed reported achieving that and having a great experience on the day thanks to the audience and the support of the event management team.

There were also unintended consequences for speakers, both negative and positive. A lot of the speakers interviewed stressed that, while they did not do their talk for the sake of professional advancement, it occurred nonetheless. Some speakers reported being able to get jobs, partly thanks to the experience they gained from the event. Other speakers talked about being able to get professional contracts off the back of their talk. More than one person had gotten funding to produce a book based on their talk, while others still talked about achieving professional legitimacy in their chosen field, in part thanks to the increased visibility their talk allowed them.

However, one of the unintended negative consequences for speakers was frustration and stress. In some cases, they expressed feeling like the support and feedback they were getting was generic and not fit for purpose. As such, there was a portion of speakers who felt like the experience of preparing for the stage was less helpful to them than it should have been. There were events where, due to the quality of the A/V, speakers felt that the finished video did not adequately reflect their level of skill or the quality of their content.

**“[AS A RESULT OF THE
EVENT,] I FELT LIKE I
WAS CATAPULTED INTO
THIS WORLD WHERE I
WAS LISTENED TO,
VALUED, AND TAKEN
SERIOUSLY.”**

Speaker-related direct proxies

Approximate market value of coaching, approximate market costs of mental health improvement programme, approximate market costs of attending similar networking events of this scope and size. These proxies were given a high weighing as it is the intended consequence and the impact is more easily proven.

Speaker-related indirect proxies

Approximate value of contracts, job opportunities, and/or book deals obtained as a result of the talk. Approximate value of lost time and work due to poor quality A/V. These proxies were given a lower weighing as it is an unintended consequence and the impact is harder to prove.

SPONSORS

Over the 3 years that TEDxBrayfordPool has been running, there have been 41 named sponsors of the events. Some have only sponsored the headline event for one year, others have been sponsors across the lifetime of the programme, for every event that has been put on by the team. For the sponsors interviewed, one of the main draws for getting involved was prior awareness of the TEDx brand and the quality that it is associated with. A lot of the people who agreed to the interview felt that the TEDx brand reflected the qualities of their own organisations and wanted to become involved because they saw it as a mutually beneficial relationship.

The main named driver for repeated sponsorship was the quality of the events put on by the TEDxBrayfordPool team. Ongoing sponsors talked at length about the hard work put in by the volunteers and how impressed they were with the finished events. A common theme in the interviews was that the sponsorship offered great value for money, not only as a marketing opportunity for the organisation, but also as a means of accessing high-quality, informative talks. The new sponsorship tiers, which were introduced in 2019 according to the interviewees, were considered a welcome change as they allowed sponsors access to even more events and thus offered an increased return on direct investment.

For many long-standing sponsors, becoming involved in the event was considered a “natural progression”, both because of their previous interest in TED and TEDx, and because of the goals and interests of the organisation. While Corporate Social Responsibility was not articulated as an intended or unintended consequence by the interviewees, they did report feeling the sponsorship was appropriate given the overarching stance of their organisation with regards to CSR.

Interviewed “one-off” sponsors reported that the main reason why they did not continue their patronage was because they got involved as speakers and volunteers the following year. It was not clear from the data what percentage of speakers had returned to being sponsors, or indeed had become sponsors for the first time themselves. However, there was a high instance of speakers returning as volunteers from year on year, suggesting that many are keen to give back to the event in whatever way they can. As such, one of the unintended positive consequences for sponsors is a closer, more personal relationship with the event than they would get from other similar deals.

On the whole, the sponsors interviewed tended to take a long view with regard to the event. When asked about ways in which it could improve, most said the team should keep doing what they are doing. Sponsors acknowledged that every such endeavour would go through growing pains as the teams learned and evolved. Some concrete suggestions put forward by sponsors about improvements were: bringing in more private businesses as sponsors, involving organisations like Lincoln BIG or the GLLEP, and also creating more opportunities for sponsors to network with speakers, either on the day or before it. Indeed, sponsors were, on the whole, keen to spend time with speakers and expanding the event, either through livestreaming licenses or through face-to-face networking.

Sponsor-related direct proxies

Cost of marketing, cost of digital marketing. These proxies were given a medium-high weighting as they are the intended consequence and the impact is more easily proven. (Aka without the sponsorship that organisation would not be getting this kind of exposure).

Sponsor-related indirect proxies

Approximate value of PR and CSR. These proxies were given a lower weighting as it is an unintended consequence and the impact is harder to prove.

SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT

Given the cited proxies, a conservative estimate of all costs gives, as a conservative estimate, a 1:25 Social Return on Investment Rate for the TEDxBrayfordPool events.

In terms of marketing, if we assume all sponsors and speakers get the minimum possible value from being featured across all the TEDx social media channels, that gives a value of £6.27 return per £1 invested across all three years.

In terms of impact on audiences and the visitor economy, a conservative estimate is a £1 return per £1 invested.

In terms of speaker impact, assuming the majority of contributors get the maximum value from the coaching and professional development, that gives a conservative estimate of £17 return per £1 invested.

Across the three years they have been running, the TEDxBrayfordPool events have brought almost £1.5m worth of social impact to their stakeholders. This impact is largely due to the fact that the event already prioritizes audiences and speakers who would not otherwise have had the opportunities they did.

SUMMARY OF SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep being amazing, but also consider:

- Opening up the main headline event for more diverse talent and speakers from under-represented groups.
- Prioritizing applications that don't come from academic backgrounds.
- Exploring opportunities for putting on the event in non-academic, non-university settings.
- Creating more opportunities for the speakers to network with sponsors.
- Creating more opportunities for the speakers to interact directly with the audience (at salons, for example).
- Finding more opportunities for involving private business as sponsors (through Lincoln BIG or the GLLEP, etc.)
- Changing up the communications and marketing for TEDxBrayfordPoolWomen and TEDxYouth@BrayfordPool to create more differentiation between these events and the headline event, for the purpose of improving the general understanding of the audience of what they are and what they are about.
- Increasing the marketing for TEDxBrayfordPool events among the “irregulars” – local community groups that would not necessarily attend the events but would find them worthwhile.
- Don't forget that the things you are doing already are why people love the events.

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