

Museums Association: Anti-Racist Museums Programme

Year 2 Evaluation Report, July 2026

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary 2

Introduction 4

Participant and Facilitator Perspectives 5

Positionality and Conditions of Participation 6

Programme Outcomes 7

Programme Design and Delivery 12

Sustaining Change and the MA's Role 13

Continuities and Developments Since Year 1 14

Conclusion 14

Appendix 15

Executive Summary

Key Findings

1. ARMP produced strong gains in knowledge, confidence and anti-racist practice

Participants reported substantial development across the programme's core outcomes. Knowledge rated good or excellent rose from 33.3% to 100%, understanding of participants' own role in systems of exclusion from 5.6% to 93.8%, and confidence in tackling racism individually from 5.9% to 56.3%. Interviews also identified greater willingness to name problems, remain with discomfort and apply anti-racist thinking in everyday practice.

2. Participants benefited in different ways according to their starting points, lived experience and organisational authority

Participants entered ARMP with varied prior knowledge, lived experience, professional roles and organisational power. Those newer to anti-racist practice particularly valued foundational concepts and tools, while others valued shared language, recognition of existing expertise and greater responsibility among colleagues. Organisational authority also shaped how far participants could translate learning into wider institutional change.

3. The programme was supportive, but the labour of participation was not always shared equitably

Most participants felt able to speak honestly and did not feel pressured to disclose personal experience, yet only 15% felt that emotional and relational labour was fairly shared. Global majority participants could be positioned as informal educators or representatives, while discussion could centre white participants' discomfort. Coaching, facilitator intervention, debriefing and global majority peer connection helped participants establish boundaries and reduced some of this burden.

4. Participants felt better equipped to initiate change than to embed and sustain it

ARMP generated strong commitment to action: 93.8% were more likely to champion anti-racist work and the same proportion were willing to allocate resources, while 75% had identified next steps and priorities. However, only 50% had developed long-term accountability plans. Sustained impact will depend on whether individual learning changes organisational decision-making, responsibility and systems.

5. Formal learning and sector connection were highly valued, while Action Learning Sets worked less consistently

Morning training and sector connection were among the programme's strongest elements, alongside positively rated online resources and coaching. Action Learning Sets received lower ratings and varied according to their purpose, facilitation, group composition and levels of trust. Peer learning remains valuable, but requires stronger early relationship-building, clearer expectations and more intentional group formation.

Recommendations

1. Invest in early trust-building and cohort formation

Begin with a substantial, facilitated in-person opening to establish relationships, explore power and positionality, and clarify the purpose of the Action Learning Sets. Form groups with attention to racialised position, authority, professional role and prior experience, while retaining the accessibility of online delivery.

2. Differentiate learning pathways and support equitable participation

Clarify the programme's level and expectations during recruitment and consider foundational and advanced phases or pathways that respond to differences in prior knowledge, lived experience, role and authority. Provide dedicated opportunities for global majority peer connection and reduce reliance on global majority participants as informal educators or representatives.

3. Strengthen support for implementation and accountability

Provide more structured support for converting individual learning into organisational change, including implementation planning, leadership and governance engagement, resource allocation and accountability. Use later check-ins to help organisations move beyond isolated activities towards changes in decision-making, policy and organisational systems.

4. Sustain sector learning and momentum

Use the MA's sector role to maintain alumni and organisational connections, share implementation experience and provide advanced learning opportunities. The MA could also explore how its convening, advocacy and standards-setting roles might support clearer expectations for anti-racist practice, including possible links to accreditation or other sector mechanisms.

Introduction

The Museums Association Anti-Racist Museums Programme (ARMP), a first-of-its-kind training programme for senior museum leaders, launched in 2024–25 with 23 participants from six organisations across three UK nations.

In Year 2, the cohort comprised 24 senior leaders from Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Museum of Watford, North East Museums, Horniman Museum and Gardens, Royal Museums Greenwich and Thackray Museum of Medicine.

The programme was again designed and delivered by Cheryl Garvey, Julian Walker and Jamie Surpway of Talk Listen Create (TLC), drawing on anti-racism resources developed by BRAP Equality in Birmingham. Delivery was mainly virtual, with a brief in-person opening at the Museums Association Conference and a final in-person session in Leeds. The programme comprised six full-day group sessions, and each participant was offered two one-to-one coaching sessions. In the first five sessions, whole-cohort morning training was followed by afternoon Action Learning Sets, initially facilitated by TLC and then self-directed. Anti-racist principles and meta-skills underpinned the programme's design and outcomes. These can be found in the appendix.

Evaluation Approach

Building on the Year 1 methodology, the evaluation was co-delivered by Tiggy Allen and Waqas Mirza, with greater attention to global majority participants' experiences and to positionality and burden across the cohort.

The evaluation combined a midpoint survey incorporating retrospective baseline questions, an endpoint survey, six participant interviews and a reflective conversation with Cheryl Garvey. Response numbers varied and respondents were not necessarily matched across surveys; comparisons therefore describe changes in aggregate self-report rather than tracked individual change.

Interviewees were selected to reflect variation in role, seniority, prior knowledge and racialised position. Findings concerning organisational implementation and lasting impact reflect immediate participant perceptions and intended actions rather than longitudinal evidence.

As in Year 1, the evaluation was guided by anti-racist evaluation principles and sought to:

- centre the experiences of global majority cohort members
- ensure that the evaluation speaks honestly about all experiences of the programme
- recognise that anti-racist work relies on embodied change and is non-linear, challenging and shaped by surrounding systems

The full set of evaluation principles can be found in the appendix.

Participant and Facilitator Perspectives

Participant Starting Points

Interviews across all six participating organisations showed that participants entered ARMP with different levels of prior knowledge, lived experience, professional authority and expectations. Some engaged with anti-racist theory in a sustained way for the first time and valued foundational concepts, language and practical tools. Others brought extensive knowledge or lived experience and found parts of the content introductory; for them, the value lay more in developing shared organisational language, recognising existing expertise and enabling colleagues to take greater responsibility.

Role and authority also shaped what participants could do with their learning. Those with influence over governance, budgets or policy could connect the programme to organisation-wide decisions, while others applied it through line management, collections, interpretation, procurement or partnership work and depended more on senior support for wider change.

The cohort's breadth was therefore both a strength and a design challenge. It enabled exchange across organisations, functions and levels of seniority, but participants did not follow a single learning journey or benefit in identical ways. The findings in this report should consequently be understood as differentiated outcomes shaped by starting point, role and organisational context.

Facilitator Perspective

A reflective conversation with Cheryl Garvey provided a delivery-side perspective on the cohort's engagement. Facilitators experienced the group as relatively quiet and hesitant, with the embodied dimension of the work taken up unevenly. Silence did not necessarily indicate disengagement, requiring facilitators to judge when to probe, challenge or allow further reflection.

When participants struggled to name whiteness, facilitators addressed it more explicitly rather than moving past it. A contribution from a guest speaker also grounded discussion of systems change in the practical realities of organisational leadership. Cheryl identified moments when participants connected systemic responsibility with work on the self, although this was not consistent across the cohort.

Positionality and Conditions of Participation

Participants generally experienced ARMP as a supportive environment in which they could contribute honestly. However, the emotional, relational and educational labour was not always shared equitably.

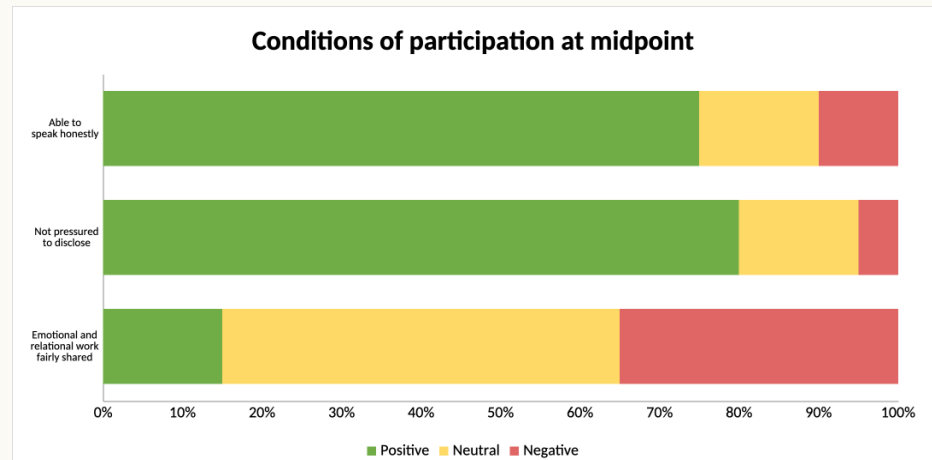
At midpoint, 75% of respondents felt able to speak honestly about racism, power and their own experiences, while 80% did not feel pressured to share more than they wished. Yet only 15% felt that the emotional and relational work was fairly shared; 50% were neutral and 35% disagreed. Being able to speak, or not being pressured to disclose, therefore did not necessarily mean that the labour of participation was fairly distributed.

Global majority interviewees described occasions when they were looked to for explanation, validation or personal testimony, which could position them as informal educators or representatives. Some also felt that discussion could centre white participants' discomfort, while leaving less space for the experiences of those directly affected by racism: *"This room is not designed for my discomfort, and my discomfort ... is taking a back seat to the mass discomfort of these white colleagues."*

Some responded by remaining silent, withholding personal experience or resisting the impulse to clarify a discussion. This could represent a boundary or an attempt to redistribute responsibility rather than disengagement. A white interviewee also recognised that processing uncertainty and discomfort could unintentionally place additional pressure on global majority colleagues. Professional authority, seniority and group composition could also shape these experiences: participants with greater organisational power could feel better equipped to challenge or absorb difficult exchanges, while those with less authority could experience greater exposure.

"It almost felt to me like people were talking about me ... and then look[ing] to the one person of colour in the room."
— Cohort interviewee

Facilitator intervention, one-to-one coaching, smaller groups, debriefing and connection between global majority participants helped reduce burden. Coaching was particularly useful in helping participants establish boundaries and recognise that supporting anti-racist work did not require them to hold every conversation. Alongside positive endpoint ratings for care, support and facilitation, this suggests that support was most effective when responsive to differences in power, experience and group dynamics.



Programme Outcomes

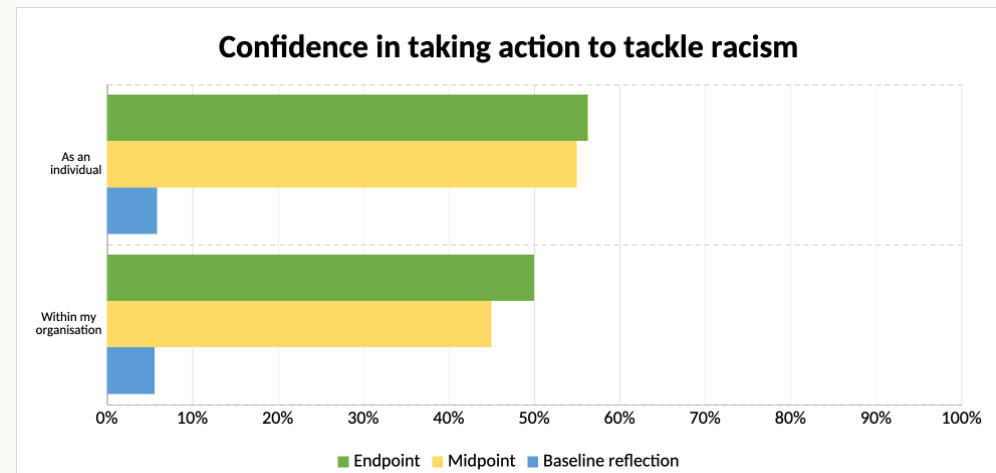
Embodied Change

Embodied change is central to ARMP and enables wider organisational and systems change. As in Year 1, it appeared in different forms and to varying degrees across the cohort.

Confidence

Confidence improved across all measures. The proportion rating themselves as **confident or very confident in tackling racism individually** rose from 5.9% at baseline to 56.3% at endpoint (+50.4 percentage points). Nearly half initially reported low confidence, compared with none at programme completion. One interviewee noted: *“I definitely feel more confident in talking about the work. Naming issues and difficulties and challenges around the work [is] something I'm still ... working on.”*

Confidence in tackling racism within organisations increased from 5.6% at baseline to 50.0% at endpoint (+44.4 percentage points). Although substantial, this remained slightly lower than confidence in individual action, likely reflecting the constraints participants faced within existing organisational systems.



Anti-Racist Meta-Skills

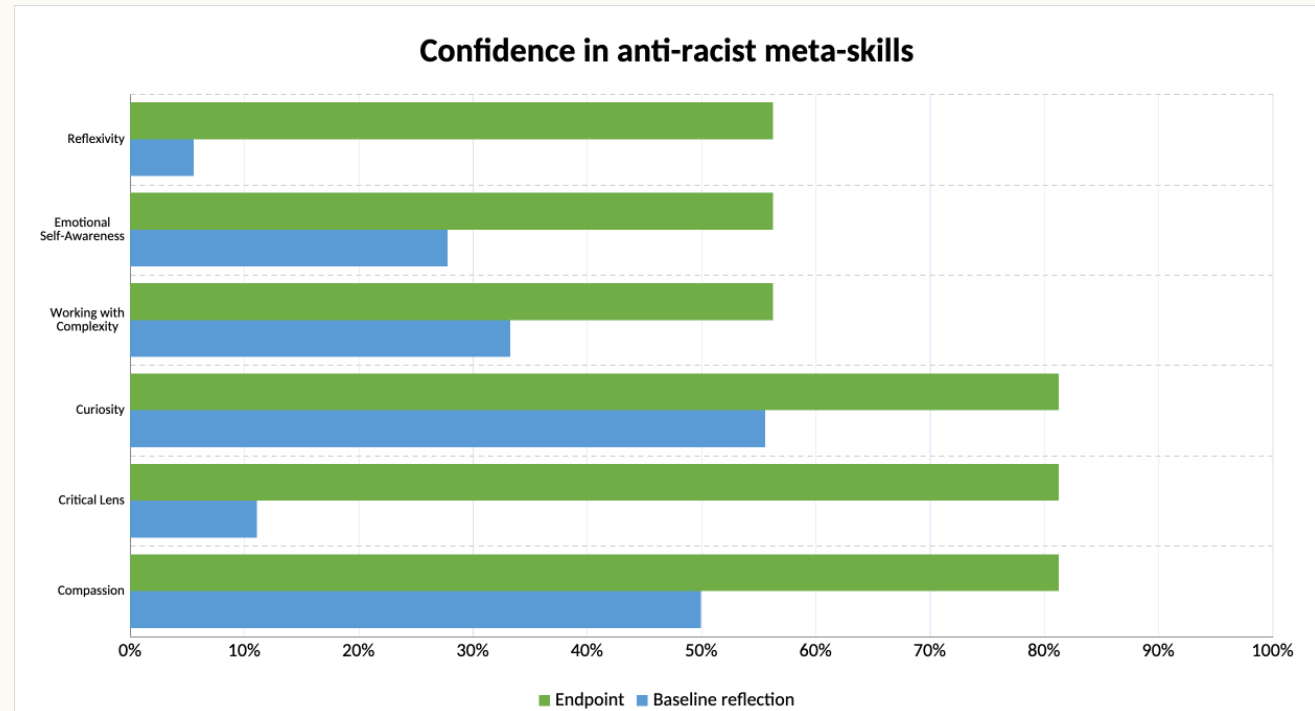
Confidence Across Meta-Skills

The six anti-racist meta-skills were central to TLC’s approach and provided a framework for participants to reflect on and develop their practice. Confidence increases in reflexivity, emotional self-awareness, working with complexity, curiosity, critical lens and compassion are examined on the following page.

“The skills, grounding and information it gives you mean that you do not avoid the issue. You feel you have a toolkit that allows you to walk forward proactively.”
— Cohort interviewee

Confidence in **Reflexivity** increased from 5.6% to 56.3% (+50.7 percentage points), one of the largest shifts recorded. By completion, all respondents rated themselves as at least somewhat confident. The low baseline and high perceived difficulty of the skill may help explain the scale of change.

Confidence in **Emotional Self-Awareness** rose from 27.8% to 56.3% (+28.5 percentage points). Its higher baseline left less scope for movement, but the findings indicate greater confidence in recognising emotional responses and positionality within anti-racist work.



Confidence in **Working with Complexity**

increased from 33.3% to 56.3% (+22.9 percentage points), the smallest increase among the six skills. However, five cohort members identified it as one of the easiest skills to practise, suggesting that perceived ease and confidence did not always align.

Confidence in **Curiosity** rose from 55.6% at baseline to 81.3% (+25.7 percentage points), with no respondents reporting low confidence at endpoint. It was also identified as the easiest skill to develop and may have provided a “way in” to the other meta-skills and to anti-racist practice more broadly.

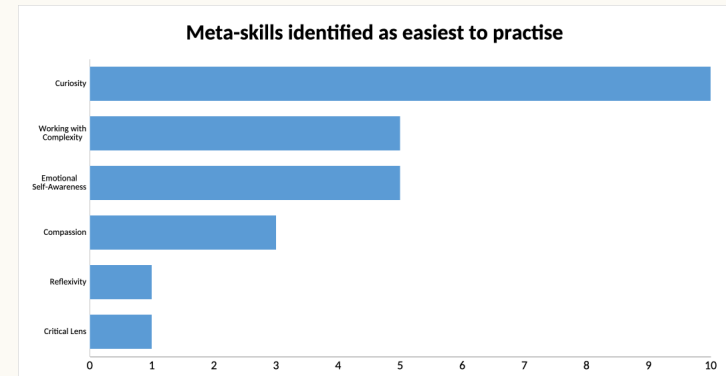
Critical Lens showed the largest increase, from 11.1% at baseline to 81.3% (+70.1 percentage points). Although regarded as one of the hardest skills to develop, participants recognised its importance in examining systems, structures and power: *“I have to find a space where I can be reflective and critical.”*

Compassion began as the strongest-performing skill and rose from 50.0% to 81.3% (+31.3 percentage points). By completion, more than four in five respondents rated themselves as confident or very confident in demonstrating it.

Ease of Practice

Curiosity was most frequently identified as the easiest meta-skill, receiving ten mentions. **Working with Complexity** and **Emotional Self-Awareness** received five each, **Compassion** three, and **Reflexivity** and **Critical Lens** one each.

Curiosity may have felt most accessible because it involves openness, listening and recognising gaps in one's own knowledge. By contrast, Reflexivity and Critical Lens demand deeper self-examination and analysis of systems and power, helping to explain why they were rarely identified as easy.



Changes in Practice

Interviews suggest that the strongest changes were behavioural and relational. Participants described greater willingness to challenge problematic language, raise concerns with colleagues and apply anti-racist thinking across management, collections, interpretation and procurement. Greater confidence could also mean asking questions, remaining with discomfort and acting rather than withdrawing.

"I feel I can actually step away from it, and my white colleagues may very well carry that mantle without me."

— Cohort interviewee

Change differed according to participants' starting points. Those newer to anti-racist practice emphasised knowledge and vocabulary, while those with greater prior knowledge or lived experience more often valued shared organisational language and greater willingness among colleagues to take responsibility.

For one participant, the programme felt personally transformative: *"From the start to the end of the course, you are a different person."* Others described more specific shifts in confidence, relationships and everyday practice. The extent to which these shifts translated into sustained organisational practice is considered later in the report.

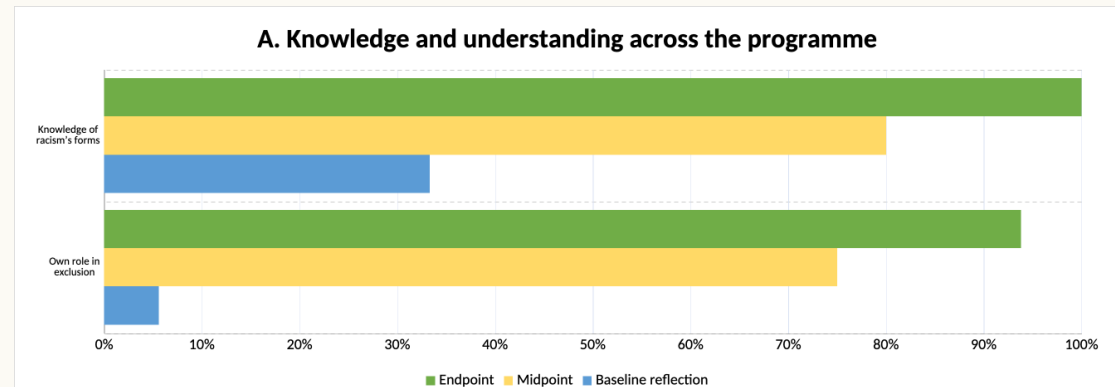
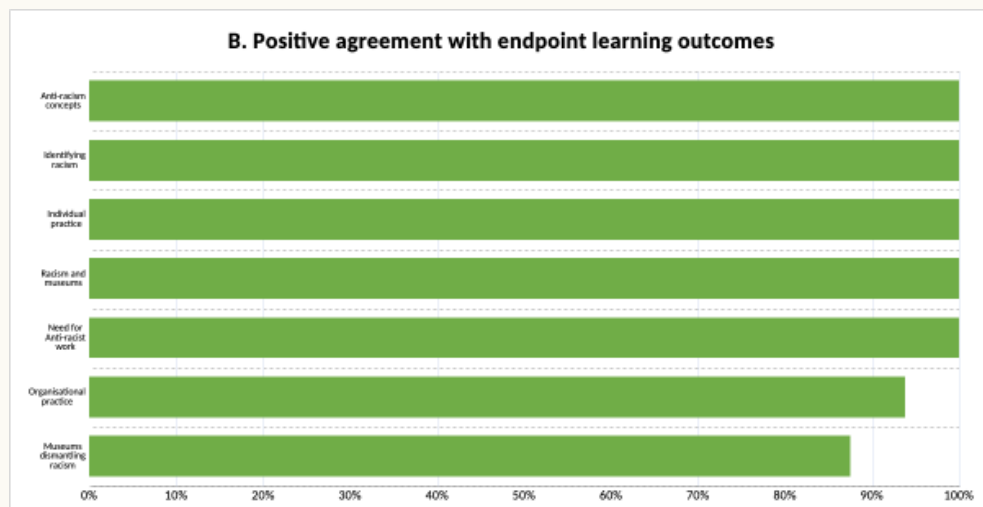
Engagement Beyond the Sessions

For some participants, engagement extended beyond the formal sessions through further reading and research, revisiting online materials, sharing resources and creating informal discussions. In some cases, ARMP also prompted contact between participating museums or strengthened existing organisational work. Engagement varied according to workload and prior knowledge. It was strongest where resources offered clear routes into further learning and could be discussed or applied with colleagues.

Equipped to Act

Knowledge and Understanding

Building theoretical knowledge was a core element of ARMP. The proportion rating their knowledge as good or excellent rose from 33.3% at baseline to 100% at endpoint (+66.7 percentage points), with no respondents rating it average or below by programme completion. One interviewee noted: *“[it] helped to have that deeper understanding of how comprehensively embedded racism is into everything. I was more used to thinking about it in terms of collections and representation.”*



Understanding of participants' own role in systems of exclusion showed the largest improvement across all measures, with good or excellent ratings rising from 5.6% to 93.8% (+88.2 percentage points). All respondents reported improved understanding of anti-racism concepts, greater ability to identify racism, and improved understanding of anti-racist practice and the relationship between racism and museums; even the lowest-rated learning outcome received 87.5% positive agreement.

However, these gains were not uniform; one interviewee entering with substantial prior knowledge reflected: *“At the end, I didn't feel that I had learned any new information, almost academically.”*

This may reflect the programme's foundational level and suggest

value in differentiated or more advanced pathways for participants with substantial prior knowledge or lived experience.

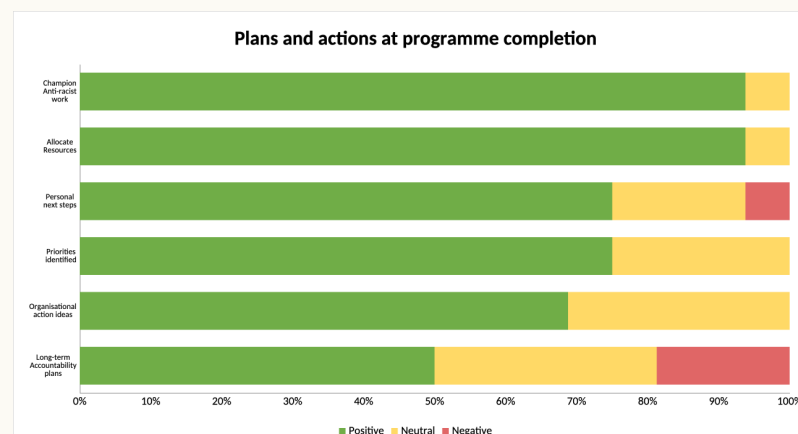
Agency, Community and Coalition

All respondents reported improved awareness of how to begin addressing privilege and power, with 12.5% strongly agreeing and 87.5% agreeing. All also reported a better understanding of how to initiate change, including 18.8% who strongly agreed. All respondents felt able to have difficult conversations about racism and to encourage their organisation to do so; in both cases, 25% strongly agreed and 75% agreed. Confidence in building an anti-racist practice was slightly lower: 87.5% agreed or strongly agreed, while 6.3% were neutral and 6.3% disagreed. This may reflect greater recognition of the complexity and scale of the work. One interviewee noted: *“As a white person, my responsibility is also to lead the work ... where Black and brown people shouldn’t have to.”*

Interview evidence also identified peer connection and shared organisational language as valuable outcomes, with some conversations continuing within and across organisations. Cohesion was uneven, however, particularly within the Action Learning Sets, suggesting that coalition-building depended on group formation and opportunities for continued contact.

Taking Action

Nearly all respondents (93.8%) were more likely to champion anti-racist work within their organisations because of ARMP, and the same proportion were willing to allocate resources to support it. Three-quarters had clear next steps for their personal practice and had identified priorities for future action. Across 15 open-text responses, participants consistently attributed added value to ARMP: even where action might otherwise have occurred, the programme brought greater depth, structure, urgency, confidence or collective support. However, confidence was lower around implementation and accountability. While 68.8% had clear ideas about tackling racism within their organisation, only 50% had identified long-term accountability plans and 18.8% disagreed that they had done so.



*“I can’t burn the whole thing down and start again.
We’re definitely ... doing the work, so how can
we thread in the learning rather than unravel?”*
— Cohort interviewee

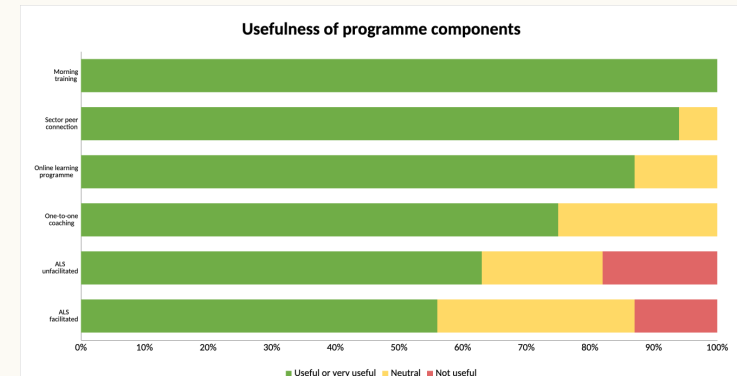
Interviews reinforced the distinction between initiating and embedding change. Participants described applying their learning through governance, management, collections, interpretation and policy, but recognised that projects or visible outputs could remain superficial unless they changed decision-making and accountability. Sustained impact will therefore depend on whether learning moves beyond individual participants and is embedded in organisational systems.

Programme Design and Delivery

Programme Format

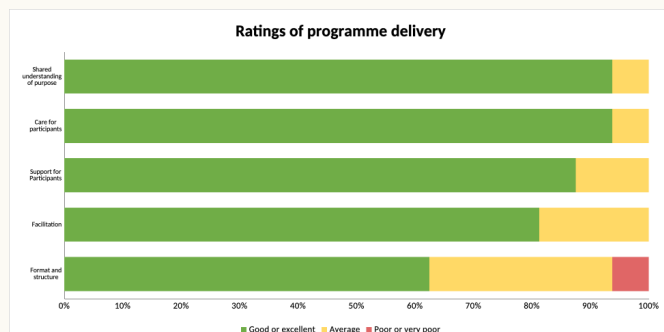
Participants particularly valued ARMP's formal learning and networking opportunities. Morning training sessions received a 100% useful or very useful rating, while 93.8% valued connecting with peers across the sector. The online learning programme (86.7%) and one-to-one coaching (75.0%) were also positively rated. Action Learning Sets received lower ratings: 56.3% rated facilitated sessions useful or very useful, compared with 62.5% for non-facilitated sessions. Programme elements combining expert input, practical learning and sector connection therefore appeared to offer the most consistent value.

"Being in a room with other museum leaders ... really brought home how much work we've got to do as a sector, but also that... collective commitment is really important."
— Cohort interviewee



Interview and facilitator reflection showed that the original ALS groupings, organised broadly by role and seniority, left some global majority participants isolated within otherwise white groups. Facilitators therefore revised the groupings. Some participants experienced the new arrangement as safer and more constructive; but even though the change reduced racial isolation, it did not remove differences in other power dynamics.

Operational Delivery



Operational delivery was rated positively, particularly in relation to its purpose, care and support. Shared understanding of the programme's purpose and care for participants were each rated good or excellent by 93.8%, followed by participant support (87.5%) and facilitation (81.3%). Format and structure received lower ratings: 62.5% rated them good or excellent, while 37.5% rated them average or poor, indicating scope for refinement.

How Format Shaped Experience

Interviews help explain the ratings for the Action Learning Sets. Participants were unclear if these were intended for action planning, facilitated reflection or self-directed discussion. As one interviewee put it, *“I know this ‘hot potato’ that I’m holding is the right one because we’ve learned this, but am I juggling it right?”* Some groups developed trust and useful exchanges; others became unfocused, fell silent once facilitators withdrew or relied too heavily on certain participants. The issue was therefore less peer learning itself than inconsistency in purpose, structure and facilitation.

Several participants felt that the brief conference opening left insufficient time to build relationships for challenging discussions online. A more purposeful in-person launch could establish trust, clarify expectations and begin forming groups while retaining the accessibility of online delivery. Full online days were also a concern and may limit access for senior leaders and trustees, whose involvement can be important to implementation. Future planning should consider session length as well as delivery mode.

Participants valued different forms of peer exchange, from connecting with people in comparable roles or organisations to discussing across functions and levels of seniority. Future delivery could combine groupings, avoid isolating participants and ensure facilitation responds to each group’s experience and power dynamics. Variation in prior knowledge and organisational authority also calls for clearer communication about ARMP’s level and outcomes. A phased model could combine foundational learning with later support for organisational change and accountability.

Sustaining Change and the MA’s Role

All respondents regarded the MA as a beneficial sector resource for decolonisation and anti-racism work: 68.8% strongly agreed and 31.3% agreed. ARMP’s immediate effectiveness was also rated highly, with 93.8% agreeing that it had built their knowledge, confidence, skills and competence.

These findings show confidence in ARMP and the MA’s sector leadership but reflect views at programme completion rather than evidence of sustained change. The evaluation provides evidence of immediate participant outcomes and intended organisational action, rather than longitudinal workforce, institutional or sector-level impact. Interviews indicated that momentum may be difficult to maintain without sufficient authority, resources or organisational support.

“A lot of organisations ... will have pockets of really excellent practice, but that’s not necessarily embedded across the whole organisation.”

— Cohort interviewee

Participants saw an ongoing role for the MA in keeping anti-racism visible, convening organisations and alumni, and sharing practical examples of implementation. Later check-ins and opportunities for peer learning could sustain momentum. Some interviewees also wanted more advanced implementation support, while others suggested using the MA’s sector influence to encourage clearer expectations or standards. More formal mechanisms, including possible links to accreditation, would require further exploration.

Continuities and Developments Since Year 1

Direct comparison is limited by differences in the evidence collected. Nevertheless, Year 2 reinforces several Year 1 findings: increased confidence and embodied learning; the importance of facilitation and peer support; unequal emotional and educational labour for some global majority participants; and difficulty translating individual change into sustained organisational practice.

Programme fit and conditions of participation were more prominent in Year 2. Differences in prior knowledge, lived experience and organisational authority shaped both what participants gained and what they carried, while relationship-building, group composition and facilitation affected trust and participation, particularly within the Action Learning Sets.

Year 2 also highlighted coaching's protective role in helping some participants establish boundaries and participate more sustainably. Together, the findings support a differentiated and phased model, moving from foundational learning through embodied practice towards implementation and accountability.

Conclusion

The Year 2 evaluation provides strong evidence of positive immediate outcomes from ARMP. Participants developed knowledge, confidence and reflective and relational skills, alongside greater readiness to engage with racism in their areas of responsibility. By combining theoretical learning with embodied reflection, skilled facilitation, coaching and peer exchange, the programme created a stronger basis for action, although the evaluation does not yet establish sustained organisational or sector-level change.

The findings also show that anti-racist learning is not experienced uniformly. Prior knowledge, lived experience, racialised position and organisational authority shaped what participants gained, what they could do with their learning and the demands placed upon them. A programme could be experienced as caring and supportive while emotional and educational labour remained unevenly distributed. Its effectiveness should therefore be judged both by overall gains in confidence and understanding and by whether different forms of expertise are recognised, responsibility is redistributed and participants can engage without carrying disproportionate burden.

The next phase should preserve ARMP's strongest elements while strengthening the pathway from individual learning to organisational change. Earlier trust-building, more purposeful peer structures and greater differentiation would improve the conditions for participation, while continued implementation and accountability support could help embed learning in decision-making and systems. The MA is well placed to sustain this work through its convening, advocacy and sector-learning role. Taken together, the two years point towards a phased model moving from foundational learning, through embodied practice, towards organisational implementation and accountability.

Appendix

Talk Listen Create used the following anti-racist principles and meta-skills in the design and delivery of ARMP. The frameworks were originally developed by BRAP Equality, Birmingham.

Anti-Racist Principles

- Dismantle racialised thinking
- Examine the unexamined norm
- Adopt a complexity mindset
- Challenge systemic oppression
- Build a coalition for change
- Disrupt and use power differently

Anti-Racist Meta-Skills

- **Curiosity:** about self and system
- **Compassion:** for self and others. See how responses are conditioned
- **Critical Lens:** noting power dynamics. Alert to how racism reasserts itself
- **Reflexivity:** Everything I learn applies to me
- **Emotional self-awareness:** feel emotions and not get 'caught'. Take data
- **Complexity:** Both/and mindset. Hold paradox, and not knowi

Anti-Racist Evaluation Principles

This evaluation seeks to challenge the features of conventional evaluation practice. These features below draw on Tema Okun's *White Supremacy Culture* framework and have been adapted here for evaluation practice.

- **Objectivity** – historically a founding principle of evaluation, but one that enables passivity and retreat to safe, rather than brave, spaces
- **Worship of the Written Word** – using the written word to categorise, annotate, and codify information
- **Right to Comfort** – evaluation reports can focus on the positive impact and shy away from critical analysis
- **Either/Or** - particularly where quantitative data are used to provide a yes/no answer to a complex question
- **One Right Way** – evaluators begin by creating a framework that becomes the 'right' way to assess impact
- **Progress is More & Quantity over Quality** – objective measurement of progress and quantitative datasets centre quantity over quality
- **Urgency** – deadlines around evaluation and the need for immediate summative evaluation create false urgency behind impact