

Review of Museum Development

December 2009



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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This report presents a review of museum development activity across England, with a principle focus on Renaissance funded museum development activity. For the purposes of this study, the following definition of museum development was adopted:

‘the professional support, advice and guidance given to museums in the region which are outside the Hub Partnership. This work is normally focused on independent and volunteer run museums, but may include small local authority museums’.

This definition is used in the business planning guidance issued to Hub museums for the period 2009 – 2011.

For the purposes of clarity, it is important to clearly define what we mean by certain terms:

- Museum development – professional assistance provided to museums out with Hub Partnerships
- Museum Development Fund – Renaissance funding distributed to each English region on the basis of the number of Accredited museums within each region
- Museum Development Officers – staff employed to deliver museum development support

1.2 Background

Professional museum development support was historically provided by Area Museum Councils (AMCs) on a regional basis. This support included curatorial advice, operational, strategic and management support. The re-structuring of AMCs and extension of their role into regional agencies for Museums, Libraries and Archives led to a dilution and in some instances the cessation of museum development support as was previously provided. A further re-structuring of MLA and re-definition of its focus further reduced the direct engagement it had with museums, and in particular small local authority, independent and voluntary museums.

The launch of Renaissance in the Regions heralded a new dawn of support for the museums sector. The structuring of Renaissance support and funding through strategically placed regional Hub museums provided an opportunity for all museums to benefit directly or indirectly from central government funding. A specific work strand entitled Museum Development, targeted at small local

authority, independent and voluntary museums and intended to benefit non-Hub museums was formally established in 2009.

A key strand of museum development has been the appointment and operation of Museum Development Officers (MDOs). It has been suggested that the existing Museum Development Officer role was initiated in England's south west by its Area Museum Council, and through the various forms of re-structuring, highlighted above, has been refined to reflect local circumstance, constraint and opportunity. Many other regions formally appointed MDOs and in some areas, posts have been in place for 20 + years. The structure and volume of resource provided by Renaissance to the sector, has in some ways contributed to the further expansion and formalisation of MDOs across the country. Renaissance funding has been used to create and sustain MDO teams / services, as well as individual posts in areas with little historic support for MDOs.

The Renaissance Review, published in 2009 highlighted the importance of MDOs and the museum development work strand. The following findings were reported by the Review Commission:

- “For the wider museums community, the most significant and highly praised impact was the Museum Development Officers network and the small grants scheme”
- The(re) is a need to strengthen and plug the gaps in the MDO network”

(Executive Summary, page 1)

In addition, the following recommendations were made:

- “It is recommended that MDOs (or their equivalents) and representatives from the wider museum community are actively involved in the planning of partnership projects with the Hub”
- “It is recommended that the Museum Development Officer network is strengthened and that significant gaps in cover are remedied”

“The Review recommends changes to the Museum Development Officer network, including that:

- The provision of MDOs is reconceived as a national framework
- Its central function should include research, development, and the ability to bring in support from external sources

- The network should be supported by a single advice point”

MLA has commissioned this study to provide both an assessment of the current museum development landscape and to consider the development of the proposed national strategic framework.

1.3 The Study Brief

The achievements of Museum Development Officers and the Museum Development Fund are considered to be of significant value to museums in the regions, but this needs to be clearly identified and mapped across the country to enable MLA to understand the current levels of support provided and the impact of the work. The potential of a national strategic framework, its governance and its impact on museum development needs to be considered and how it can be aligned to Renaissance objectives. The main outputs of this study are to be:

- Development of an agreed statement as to what is meant by museum development for English museums;
- Identifying the nature and extent of museum development activity in each region;
- Identifying the existing mechanisms for delivery of that support;
- Assessing the success of the museum development work outputs and outcomes;
- Identifying and agreeing criteria for the strategic aims of a future national museum development framework;
- Making recommendations for what a national network would look like, the governance mechanisms and the resources required.

The above should be considered in the context of other activities, for example the review of Accreditation and the role of curatorial advisors, and changes to the MDO structure in London.

1.4 Study Methodology

The following tasks were undertaken to develop an evidence base to respond to the areas of enquiry highlighted above:

- Review of documentation in connection with museum development funding provided by MLA through Renaissance
- Review of documentation in connection with the structures and activities relevant to each English region
- Attendance at an Interim Museum Development Officer Network meeting

- Consultation with MDO representatives and stakeholders in each region
- Preparation of a self completion survey sent to all MDOs (30 returned)
- Consultation with museum sector representatives (including Association of Independent Museums, Museums Association)
- Liaison with steering group and day-to-day contact at MLA

1.5 Report Structure

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

Section 2	Museum Development Landscape
Section 3	Museum Development Fund
Section 4	Definition and Scope of Museum Development
Section 5	Museum Development Recommendations
Section 6	National Strategic Framework for Museum Development
Section 7	Summary and Recommendations
Appendix A	Consultation Conducted

2 The Museum Development Landscape

2.1 Introduction

This section aims to provide an overview of the museum development landscape in England, with primary emphasis on Renaissance funded activity, and as such this section summarises the diverse range of approaches to museum development and highlights key issues associated with this.

2.2 Strategic Approach to Museum Development

In discussing the strategic approach to museum development across England with Hub Managers, MDO representatives and stakeholders from within and out with the museum domain, it is clear that a variety of approaches have been taken to the delivery of ‘museum development’ support and activity. Regional strategic priorities have been identified and delivered by Hub and other partners based on the identified or perceived needs of the museum sector in the region or within defined geographic sub-regions, or themes. Representatives of the sector consulted have been unanimous in highlighting a lack of direction or statement of outcomes expected by MLA, where Renaissance is a main funding source for activity. In some regions, this has been highlighted as a weakness in the approach taken to museum development, however in others, this has been viewed as an opportunity for the Hub Partnership and wider stakeholders to work with the sector to identify and respond to sector needs.

In all but two regions, a geographic approach has been taken to the delivery of activity. Sub-regional approaches with MDOs based in local authorities or individual museums is the norm, with MDOs being responsible for a particular geographic area, often a county, or area of the region, e.g. north, east etc.

However, in England’s North West, the Hub has taken a thematic approach to the delivery of museum development support. The North West Hub’s view is that all Renaissance activity supports museum development and as such, the ‘museum development’ work strand and Museum Development Funding (MDF) should be focused on supporting key areas of strength in the region, within the strategic agenda set by the Hub. Therefore, a Roman Heritage Development Officer, and Natural Sciences Development Officer have been appointed to support museums which can link in to themes and areas of activity.

In England’s North East, a Senior Museum Development Officer is in post, however the approach to delivery of service differs from every other region. Museum development is one part of the role, that also involves liaising with key networks and signposting enquiries from museums to other providers of advice, rather than the direct delivery of support from the MDO role.

2.3 Delivery of Museum Development Support

2.3.1 Museum Development Officers

Discussions have been held with MDOs and representatives of museum development officers across the nine English regions. One of the main areas of discussion was to identify and quantify the number of, and funding sources for MDO posts across England. The following table summarises the findings of our research.

Table 2.1: Number and Funding Sources of MDOs by Region

Region	Museum Development Posts (FTE)	Sources of Funding	Accreditation Posts (FTE)
North West	6	All Renaissance	1
North East	1	Renaissance	1
Yorkshire and Humber	5	All Renaissance	1
West Midlands	8	7 Renaissance, 1 LA funded	1
East Midlands	6	5 Renaissance, 1 LA funded	1
East of England	13.6	11.6 Renaissance funded, 2.6 FTE LA funded	0.6
London	6	All Renaissance	N/A
South West	13.5	3 fully funded by LA, remainder partnership funded by LA and Renaissance	1
South East	5.6	All Renaissance or MLA	0.2
TOTAL	64.7		6.8
Key: MDF - Museum Development Fund LA - Local Authority			

We believe this assessment to be accurate at the time of writing; however we are aware of potential changes in the network, and also conscious of different approaches to and understanding of what is meant by a MDO. We have chosen here to focus on posts, or members of staff who are defined as ‘Museum Development Officers’. Undoubtedly there will be other museum professionals across the country and within regions who provide support to develop museums,

e.g. local authority officers etc. However, this is very challenging to identify and quantify. Similarly, the extent to which MLA can directly influence the support

provided by other museum professionals is difficult to assess. Therefore, by identifying those posts which MLA / Renaissance fund, or have an interest in, we can identify the areas where MLA policy can assist in guiding or supporting delivery.

The second column focuses on the number of posts by region, whilst the third column highlights the number of posts funded from particular sources. The definition of an MDO includes those posts categorised as MDOs and those highlighted by Hub Managers, or similar as providing a wide range of support to small, voluntary, or independent museums. We have endeavoured to capture all relevant posts.

We have not captured data on the salary and terms of employment for each MDO, instead we have focused on the financial support provided by stakeholders to cover the cost of MDOs and their activities. We are aware that a key issue within the MDO network is the very different employment arrangements, and salaries paid to MDOs. This is as a result of the evolution of museum development arrangements and in some cases the cocktail of funding used to fund posts in some regions. From the table above, we can estimate the following:

- 57.7 posts are supported by Renaissance including MDF
- Approximately 8 posts are directly funded by local authorities

In aggregate, MLA directly funds approximately 58 museum development posts via Renaissance. This is a significant investment in supporting small voluntary, independent and local authority museums. Local authorities directly contribute to the employment of approximately 8 posts. This is challenging to quantify exactly as in some areas, the provision of support to museums, which would be comparable to museum development activity is one part of a post, which is not necessarily easily quantified into full-time equivalence.

The funding of MDOs clearly varies greatly across England with entire services being funded by Renaissance in some areas, and entire services being funded by a cocktail of different funders in others. This has significant implications for the proposed creation of a national strategic framework, and national network of MDOs. The number, geographic dispersal and funding of MDOs across England varies considerably. Therefore, any significant change to the existing network may

put at risk the existing contribution (financially, in-kind and politically) made by existing external funders and may undo years of relationship building and project delivery.

Table 2.1 also provides details of the number of full-time equivalent posts dedicated to Accreditation in each of the English regions. It should be recognised however that in most regions, dedicated Accreditation Officers are supported by MDOs or Museum Development Teams and as such the Accreditation staff support in the final column does not reflect all resource provided to support Accreditation. Each region, with the exception of London receives £30,000 from MLA to provide support to museums working towards, or applying for Accredited Status.

2.3.2 MLA Resources Applied to Museum Development

Over the period 2009-11, approximately £7.5 million will be allocated to ‘museum development’ activity by MLA. This estimate includes 2 years of Museum Development Funded initiatives and 2 years of Accreditation support. In total therefore, resources allocated to museum development will account for almost 10% of resources distributed to Hubs (£82 million).

2.3.3 Activities and Services Provided by MDOs

In all regions, the services provided by MDOs are targeted at the needs of small, independent or voluntary museums in the region, or sub-region. Based on our review, it is clear that MDOs serve all, or a selection of the following client groups:

- Individual museum staff or governing bodies
- Museum and associated networks
- Local authorities and other strategic stakeholders
- MLA

The services provided to these client groups are summarised in the following table and are based on feedback received directly from MDOs regarding their activities, and from discussions with strategic stakeholders.

Table 2.2: Services Delivered by MDO by Client Group

CLIENT GROUP			
MUSEUMS	NETWORKS	LA AND STAKEHOLDERS	MLA / RENAISSANCE
Support in working towards or securing Accreditation	Coordination of Geographic or Thematic Networks	Providing advocacy or evidence of impact of museums	Link between museums and national policy
Collections care advice including conservation, environmental control	Managing network development	Advising on implications of changes in political power	Sell participation in Renaissance projects to museum development audience
Fundraising support, identification of funding opportunities and preparation of funding applications	Providing resources to support the network and activities it provides	Advising on re-constitution to Trust status	Brokering and recruitment of Curatorial Advisers
Organisation and delivery of training		Link between museums and local policy	
Co-ordinating projects		Advocacy and liaison with LA and senior members	
Communication of information including marketing and promotion		Representation on Community Strategy Forums	
Signposting to other advisers or providers of service		Partnership brokering	
'Translating' strategic messages to diverse museum constituency		Sit on strategic boards to represent non-hub museums	
Providing museums with the 'tools' to deliver			
Board and volunteer development programmes			
Recruitment and preparation of job descriptions			
Audience development advice and support			
Identifying training needs			
Awards events – championing work of museums			
Design and interpretation of collections			
Education planning using collections			
Funding via a locally administered grants scheme			

It should be stressed that not all MDOs provide all of the services identified above. The table is intended to provide an indication of the types of support which MDOs provide to each of the identified client groups. Examples of support provided include:

Museums: MDO activity with museums ranges from support to achieve professional standards to day-to-day operational support, such as writing and advertising staff vacancies and user activity planning.

Networks: In some areas, such as the South West, MDOs have played a key role in facilitating and coordinating geographic or thematic networks. Staff time and financial resources are often allocated to bring the network together, whilst also paying for speakers or professional advisers to address the network on particular topics of relevance.

Local Authority: Recently, the MDO team in London has moved towards further supporting the Local Government Improvement Agenda including the Cultural Improvement Programme. Specifically MDOs are engaged in supporting the delivery of the National Cultural Improvement Strategy using the Culture and Sport Improvement Toolkit (CSIT). The CSIT includes internal review, external peer review from neighbouring museums or local authorities, action plan development and review of progress. MDOs in London have played a key role in this process, facilitating internal and external reviews, and developing improvement plans with local authorities and museum services.

This process draws together amongst others, senior local authority managers, museum services and other relevant departments of Council. The intention is that the CSIT becomes a mechanism of creating a network between these organisations and individuals, and the planning, implementation and review process will enable and strengthen a self-sustaining network. The role of the MDO may be to facilitate and engage this network as it proceeds towards self-sustainability.

In other regions, MDOs support local authority museums as they consider charitable trust status, or advise following a change in political leadership.

2.3.4 Management and Governance Structures of MDOs

As indicated above, the current tapestry of MDOs and support networks varies across England. This is expected to be as a result of different approaches taken by, or value placed on museums and the wider cultural sector by different local authorities, the legacy of Area Museums Councils, the response to the need for museum development support in different Hub partnerships and the availability of funding within regions. The range of different approaches taken has resulted in varying management and governance structures adopted and the extent to which this influences activity or priorities in particular regions. For instance:

- East Midlands – 5 MDOs are based in County museums and are managed by a Museum Development Manager. Leicestershire County Council (LCC) employs all MDOs as LCC is the Hub partner for museum development. The Museum Development Manager reports to the Head of Arts and Heritage (as line manager). It was reported that this provides strong links into the local authority improvement agenda and ensures that the benefits of museum development are communicated to appropriate tiers of local government. This structure is easier to apply as the majority of posts are funded by Renaissance.
- South West - 17 MDOs each with its own unique funding mix. In a number of cases, the post is funded by MDF and a local authority, or in some cases two tiers of local authority, (Town Council and Borough Council). Setting agreed priorities which meet numerous funders and the needs of the sector therefore can be challenging. Where MDOs are funded by MDF, there are channels in place to ensure that progress against agreed indicators are presented to the Renaissance Programme Manager.

In terms of management structure of MDOs there is a broad spectrum of approaches taken. At one end, all MDOs are managed by one post, employed by one employer and have a reporting mechanism to one funder or local authority. We anticipate that this could provide strategic clarity in terms of purpose of the regional service, whilst also providing a route into local government for the purposes of strategic impact.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, we have a regional MDO structure which is funded by a diverse range of sources, very locally focused on particular issues, or types of museum, with MDOs reporting to numerous stakeholders. It is anticipated that one of the key benefits of this approach is that MDOs are well placed to respond to the particular needs of the sector within the geographic location.

In moving forward, the national strategic framework needs to take cognisance of the range of approaches taken to employment of MDOs, their funding and organisational or management structure.

2.5 MDO Reported Successes

MDOs report success against performance indicators agreed with their funding agency (ies). Consideration of progress or achievement against these indicators provides an assessment of the success of MDO activity. In a survey issued to MDOs, Jura Consultants asked respondents to highlight wider benefits or successes which they have helped to create in their area. The following provides a summary of some of the key issues raised:

- Far greater cohesiveness within the sub-region's museum sector through the fostering of a recognisable community of interest relating to museums
- Greater number of museums achieving or working towards Accreditation and raising of standards
- Museums being confident and competent enough to contribute to national consultation processes such as the recent Accreditation Review.
- Greater awareness within museums of the context in which they operate, which gives them the ability to respond to the tourism agenda, local authority agendas and government initiatives, which can provide access to funding or help secure local authority support.
- Facilitating partnership working both within and outside the sector, resulting in joint projects, with other museums, other organisations within the sector and with external partners.

2.6 Gaps in Museum Development at Regional / Sub Regional Level

As part of the questionnaire mentioned above, MDOs were asked to highlight any gaps in museum development infrastructure at a regional level. In most instances, the key gap was in terms of capacity and commitment to forward funding of posts and initiatives. There is a real requirement to instil confidence in Museum Development Services via effectively funding MDOs to provide security that posts and service will continue in the long-term.

There is a need to gather useful evidence which shows the economic and social impacts of museum development activity. This will contribute to local and national advocacy.

It was reported that there is a lack of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) support open to MDOs. Where professional development does occur this is driven by the MDO with little support from elsewhere. As museums expect MDOs to be able to provide advice and guidance on a diverse range of topics, and stay up-to-date with a diverse range of agenda, it has been suggested that MDOs and the wider sector would benefit from CPD provision for MDOs.

Finally, regional approaches and geographic borders to activity ensure that MDOs are not, or are less able to interact with neighbouring museums or partners from other regions. In some areas this may restrict the quality or breadth of initiative delivered.

2.7 Challenges

Generally, MDOs acknowledge the need and benefit of providing strategic support to the museum sector. The benefits of linking museum activity to local, regional and national agenda are also recognised in terms of advocacy and demonstrating value. However, it has been stressed that this creates significant challenges in providing support to small, independent or voluntary museums, for which there is no direct incentive to engage in local or national strategic debate. This creates significant problems where funding is linked to National Indicators or where small museums do not have the capacity to justify pursuing these priorities. Any future national framework should therefore acknowledge the profile of museums across the country and their capacity in providing leadership and where appropriate allocating resources.

2.8 Future Strategic Priorities

The future priorities as identified by those MDOs that returned a completed a survey can be summarised as:

- Continue to raise standards within and out with the context of Accreditation
- Greater strategic development to link into local priorities
- Partnership working to maximise benefits of support, funding and efficiency of resources
- To be more bottom-up rather than top-down, not being driven by national agency / government department(s)
- Advocacy, particularly with local authorities, but also with other bodies such as destination management partnerships, 3rd sector infrastructure, education sector on value of museums and contribution they can make
- Enabling / helping museums to demonstrate value against wider agenda, to be genuinely reflective of their communities, to use technology effectively etc

2.9 Wider MDO Issues

2.9.1 Perception of “Strategic” versus “Hand Holding” Activity

At the outset of this study, there was a lack of clarity within MLA of the type of support provided by MDOs and the wider Museum Development Renaissance work strand. Confirmation was required in connection with the extent to which this support was strategic in nature, i.e. responding to museum need, within a wider context, or operational, i.e. providing advice on particular aspects of museum

activity, e.g. artefact storage conditions. It is clear to the study team that the approach taken by MDOs across England varies, however there is considerable evidence to suggest that there is a significant volume of strategic support being provided by MDOs and MDF funded activity to the sector.

In addition, operational support is considered by many MDOs to be a vital aspect of relationship development, often providing an opportunity to initiate first contact with particular museums. Once a relationship is developed, the MDO is then more able to suggest strategic approaches to opportunities, or encourage partnerships or consideration of the wider agenda.

2.9.2 Longitudinal Funding and Support to Unlock Potential

It is clear from consultation with MDOs and wider stakeholders that a key role of MDOs is and should continue to be the identification of existing or latent potential, and the delivery of support to unlock or maximise the potential contribution which could be made by a particular museum. This, alongside the need to develop relationships with museums and museum networks suggests that engagement with and delivery of support to museums should be evaluated on a long-term basis. There is an argument to suggest that MDO and MDF funding should be allocated on a medium to longer-term basis, to allow projects to be appropriately established and delivered. The planning horizon in terms of project formation, delivery and assessment needs to be much longer term in nature to allow projects to be effectively planned, delivered and the benefits effectively measured against established indicators or outcomes.

Project development timetables should converge with the museum planning timescale. In some areas, MDF planning is undertaken at the start of the financial year, when museums are open and have already set their plans for the coming period / season. This leads to difficulties in encouraging buy-in, or commitment from some museums as they have already set their plan for the year.

2.9.3 Mediation, Translation, Negotiation

MDOs have indicated that a key function of their role is the translation of MLA policy and communication to segments of the museum community. This role has evolved due to restructuring at MLA which reduced the scale and role of field teams, but also as a result of the direct contact which MDOs have with museums, and museum networks. In addition, it was reported that due to this close working relationship with a particular segment of the museum community, MDOs are uniquely placed to communicate back to MLA, the issues faced by the sector.

2.10 National or Inter-Regional Connections

At present there is an interim Museum Development Officer Network. This group has met on several occasions to discuss the issues facing museums in the context of the museum development work strand and are currently working towards formally establishing the group as an official network. In addition, there have been two recent MDO conferences, funded by Renaissance and delivered in tandem with the Association of Independent Museums (AIM) conference, however these conferences are by no means a set annual feature.

In the East of England there has been the recent creation of a network of Museum Development Managers, with managers from the East of England, East Midlands and South East meeting to discuss issues which affect MDO Management.

The points raised above further highlight the fractured and ad hoc approach to museum development. The absence of a regular national conference or means of communicating with a national museum development workforce is an omission which should be addressed to bolster the workforce, whilst being a platform from which key messages can be communicated. The recent development of cross regional networks at management level is a positive step, however it could equally be argued that a more pro-active approach to this type of strategic partnership should be more effectively encouraged and established.

2.11 Summary

The existing museum development landscape is characterised by significant variances in the following areas:

- Strategic approach taken
- Resources available and the number of active MDOs in each region
- Types of activity delivered by MDOs in each region
- Management, employment and governance structures
- Reporting arrangements and data collection

This variance in resource, priority and activity has considerable implications for the development of a national approach / framework for museum development.

In many regions, the activities or approach taken to museum development has attracted significant financial, in-kind or political support. This should not be underestimated and again should be considered in the development of the framework. Care must be taken to ensure that any framework developed

strengthens existing arrangements and does not provide justification for withdrawal of existing support from key funders, or destroy relationships and benefits which have developed organically, and through the efforts of existing and previous MDOs.

3 Museum Development Fund

3.1 Introduction

Museum Development Funding (MDF) is a ring-fenced strand of Renaissance and it is allocated on the basis of the number of Accredited Museums in a particular region. Allocations for the period 2008/09 – 2010/11 are provided below.

Table 3.1: Allocation of MDF

Region	2008/09 £,000	2009/10 £,000	2010/11 £,000
North East	52	53	53
South West	191	196	196
West Midlands	119	122	122
East of England	144	148	148
East Midlands	79	81	81
London	100	103	103
North West	125	128	128
South East	223	229	229
Yorkshire	142	146	146
TOTAL	1,175	1,206	1,206

3.2 Strategic Guidance and Use of Funds

The 2009/11 Hub business planning guidance provides the following examples of programme strands which could be delivered under museum development funding:

- Accreditation advice
- Achieving other nationally recognised standards
- Support for education programmes
- Support for local museums forums
- Development of local museum development strategies
- Management of grant funds

In practice, a diverse range of approaches have been adopted across England to the use of museum development funding. In the absence of strategic direction from MLA or others, there is evidence that some Hub partnerships have taken responsibility for considering the strategic and operational use of museum development resources. For instance in the absence of strategic priorities defined by MLA, Renaissance Yorkshire has been proactive in identifying local priorities

and then putting in place mechanisms to measure outputs and outcomes against activities delivered.

The following sections provide examples of how MDF has been used in particular regions:

3.1.1 North East – Broadening Horizons Programme

Three programmes were delivered using the North East MDF resource under the heading of Broadening Horizons:

- Succession Planning
- Audience Development
- Business Development

Succession planning specifically aimed to support board development in volunteer-run museums and assist these museums to recruit new volunteers. Consultants worked with 5 volunteer museums to develop a succession action plan based on self assessment. The audience development project was designed to embed audience data capture and analysis as a means of enhancing planning. Five workshops were delivered across the North East, attended by 33 representatives from 15 museums. The business planning programme was devised to make museums more effective, through focussing of resources and planned delivery. The intended impact is that museums have more sustainable business models.

3.2.2 East of England – Museums Strategy for the East of England

In the East of England, several MDOs are funded by the Local Authority. Therefore MDF funding is allocated to the delivery of activity. The Museum Development Manager has worked closely with the museum community and MDOs to develop a Museums Strategy for the East of England. This has shaped and informed the use of MDF funding. Each MDO receives a proportion of the MDF resource available based on the number of Accredited Museums in their region and they report quarterly on the use of funding against the strategy and plan developed for their region.

This approach has assisted in the development of partnerships and relationships with stakeholders. However, the main benefit is that it responds directly to local need and other projects which may be in-progress. Each MDO uses their MDF allocation differently e.g.:

- In Hertfordshire MDF funding pays for a Learning Officer
- In Cambridgeshire MDF part funds a Partnership Officer and part funds a grants scheme
- In Suffolk MDF pays for an Assistant Officer

3.2.3 South West – Volunteer Development

Museum Development Funding in the South West has been used to initiate significant partnership projects which will address local or regional museum need, whilst linking to the local strategic improvement agenda. The South West has a large number of volunteer run and independent museums. Therefore workforce development in the South West is focused upon identifying, recruiting and training volunteers to work in museums. A project has been developed, and led by museums in Cornwall to look strategically at the issues associated with volunteer recruitment in the South West. Pilot initiatives will be tested to identify the best mechanisms of addressing demand for volunteers. The findings of this project will be for the wider benefit of the museums sector in the South West.

3.2.4 Small Grant Funds

In many areas, small grant funds have been established for small museums to bid for funding to address particular issues. In some areas, demand or needs are identified by museums in isolation, or in consultation with MDOs, and bids are made, whilst in others, more structured processes are in place. In the East of England for example, a skills bank entitled SHARE has been established. Professional advice from museums across the region is pledged and museums can bid for this support to address particular issues. The professional adviser works with museum staff to develop a solution to the problem, before bidding for funding from the grants scheme to address it.

3.4 Demonstrating the Impact of MDF

As a result of a lack of strategic direction or focus on the expected outputs, or outcomes of the Museum Development investment, a variety of approaches and diverse range of activities and programmes have been adopted. It is therefore impossible to aggregate in any meaningful way, the output, or benefit associated with the investment.

Individual regions have created their own performance measures which are relevant to the activities and types and support provided by MDOs. In many instances, and as a result of the types of engagement undertaken by MDOs, measures of performance tend to be output focused in nature, e.g.

- Number of engagements with museums
- Number of museums supported in connection with Accreditation
- Number of attendees / participants on training programmes arranged by an MDO

These measures provide an indication of the level of activity in a particular region but do not provide evidence of the impact of financial or time investment. We

acknowledge the difficulties in identifying outcomes or impacts of MDO / MDF investment when funding is short-term and in many cases the contribution made by MDO or MDF does not directly lead to an output measure as monitored by Renaissance, i.e. number of visitors. The role of the MDF where it employs staff, and in some cases delivers projects, is to facilitate the creation of benefits, rather than being the direct deliverer of benefits. In moving forward, the national strategic framework and activities of a national MDO network must have in place consistent meaningful performance indicators which are related to activity delivered.

3.5 MDF - Wider Issues

It has been argued by Museum Development and Hub representatives, that a key advantage of the MDF is that it provides an effective means of engaging with local authorities. In some instances, MDF partnership or core funds initiatives and therefore acts as an incentive for local authorities to engage in activity with MDOs or museums which MDOs support.

As has been highlighted above, in some regions, MDF partnership or core funds additional posts which support the ethos of museum development. This is particularly significant in the East of England, but also in the South West where MDF is used as partnership funding to support several posts.

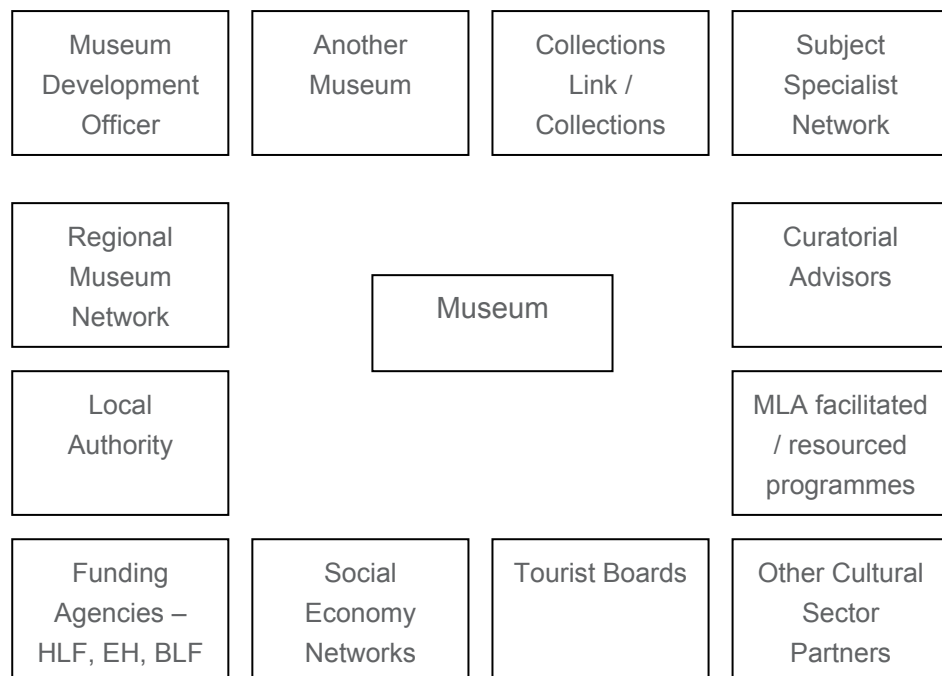
4 Definition and Scope of Museum Development

4.1 Introduction

At present, ‘Museum Development’ is a discrete Renaissance work strand. On reflection, this is an anomaly as the Renaissance programme in its entirety is focused on enhancing and developing the museum sector through strategic investment and delivery of programming. Therefore, existing terminology around museum development is the cause of some confusion as it is seen as a separate element of Renaissance activity when in reality it cuts across everything that Renaissance does. The consultation process for this study highlighted this as an issue and suggested that a clearer definition is required in terms of purpose and focus.

In addition, in considering museum development, and its delivery mechanisms, across England, we have developed the following diagram to illustrate the diverse range of sources of ‘museum development’ support, identified by the study team. However, it should be noted that the supply from these sources of support will vary from locality to locality (and at different spatial levels), and from museum service to museum service.

Chart 1: Wider Support for Museum Development



Museum development support, out with MDOs varies from museum to museum, by museum project, local drivers, availability of support and activity of museum staff.

The diagram above aims to provide a sense of the types of support available, from collections management (Collections Link / Trust, Curatorial Advisers), sustainability and tourism (Tourist Boards), business development, and partnership development (Regional Museum Network). Therefore, MDOs and the resource provided by Museum Development Funding is one part of a tapestry of museum support.

4.2 Museum Development in the Context of Renaissance

From our consultation with the sector, it is clear that there is considerable confusion and a lack of clarity regarding the focus and priority of the existing museum development work strand. This is relevant in the following areas:

- Who is it for?
- What does it aim to achieve?
- What type of development support should it provide?
- What should a museum expect from MDOs and / or MDF?

As indicated in Sections 2 and 3 of this report, there are significant regional variations in terms of the profile of the museum sector, their needs and the strategic and operational response taken to delivering museum development support. Within this context, it is our view that a 'one-size fits all' definition is not constructive or useful. Instead, we consider it more effective to highlight guiding principles which will support regions to effectively link their approach to museum development to others.

We consider that effective museum development guiding principles are:

*Museum development is support for small local authority, independent and voluntary museums which addresses both an identified museum, cluster or sector issue **and** links to the local strategic agenda*

For instance:

- Activities and support which encourage museums to enhance their current curatorial or management standards

- Activities and support which encourage museums to develop audience focused activity which delivers benefit for the museum and its community.

4.3 Museum Development Branding

In providing a clearer definition of what is meant by museum development, MLA should also consider the branding of museum development and its activities. There is clearly no need to alter the terminology used for Museum Development Officers; however consideration should be given to renaming the Museum Development Fund. This could be renamed by beneficiary:

- Grant Fund to Support Small Local Authority, Independent and Voluntary Museums

or by purpose, e.g. to develop strategic partnerships across museum types highlighted above and beyond:

- Strategic Challenge Fund

5 Museum Development Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

This section provides a series of recommendations with regard to the future of museum development activity funded, or supported by MLA. These findings and recommendations are informed by our documentation review and consultation with the sector. We have presented our recommendations at this section of the report, as these serve to inform the national strategic framework provided at Section 6.

5.2 Findings and Recommendations

Where appropriate we have presented findings from our research followed by a recommendation to address the main conclusions drawn from our review.

5.2.1 Museum Development Officers

The existing allocation, priority, role and function of MDOs across England appears to be as a result of historic interventions and priorities, perceptions of museums or the value placed on museums or cultural services. As such, the existing MDO network is funded very differently in each region, with different resources being available to serve needs.

Approaches taken in many regions have been adopted in response to museum need, which in many instances, is driven by the profile of museums in a particular area. The South West for instance, with a large number of voluntary or independent museums has a large number of MDOs who operate on a very local basis, serving in some instances one unitary authority area. The constituency of museums also informs the type of support provided. Again, in the south west, support is more directly aligned to operational needs in some areas, in line with demand from the sector. In other areas where sub-regional approaches are taken to addressing local authority and larger independent museums, it is appropriate that a different approach and strategy is adopted to meet museum need.

Recommendation 1: *The diverse tapestry of activity, MDOs and their funding profile, which responds to local need, is a key strength of existing provision and should be supported, rather than disassembled and re-constituted.*

Recommendation 2: *The current profile, network and geographic distribution of MDOs should be respected and it would be, in our view, counter-productive to adopt a new model, when there is little evidence that the current system is not effective.*

Recommendation 3: *The role of MLA as a strategic body and funding distributor on behalf of Renaissance and other agencies is to provide clearer strategic direction in terms of priority at a national level. This should then be interpreted locally to ensure that MDO activity responds to local demand, but within the context of a national agenda. Linkages to local strategic priorities are therefore critical.*

Recommendation 4: *It is challenging to assess the number of MDOs and answer the question, is there enough or too many in a particular region? It is clear that if offered more funding for MDOs, most areas would argue the case to secure additional resources. In moving forward, Hubs should be encouraged to argue for MDF funding to appoint MDOs if they can demonstrate a clear need, linked to a work plan and specific objectives. This should ensure that museum requirements direct future distribution of MDO resources.*

Recommendation 5: *MDOs should continue to provide advice and support to museums outside the Hub partnerships. However where possible, attempts should be made to encourage effective **partnerships between non-Hub museums and non-Hub and Hub museums**. Partnerships should not assume that the larger partner is the lead in all aspects. In some cases the smaller partner may have a lead or key role.*

Recommendation 6: *MDOs should focus on supporting museums that have the potential to contribute to the achievement of local strategic priorities as highlighted in documents such as Local Area Agreements.. The focus should be on identifying potential within museums and identifying methods of releasing this potential.*

Recommendation 7: *We acknowledge the recommendation in the Renaissance Review to consider a national network of MDOs. A key driver of this was to deliver consistency of provision across the country. We consider that **consistency** in this context should be on **consistency of strategic direction and focus**, not on a formula to identify the number of museums per MDO, or direct the types of activity which should be delivered.*

Recommendation 8: *A great strength of the current approach to museum development is that it is currently driven from the region and it responds to regional or local need. MLA should continue to support this approach and where possible provide direction to extend the benefits of this approach.*

5.2.2 Museum Development Fund

Finding 1: *Operation of the MDF has never been managed with sufficient strategic direction and as such regions have taken very different approaches to using this funding. This has made aggregation of output against investment challenging and as such an estimation of the success of the Renaissance investment is impossible. However there is evidence of successful initiatives being delivered by MDF.*

Finding 2: *MDF part funds numerous posts and as such withdrawal of this funding scheme would result in the loss of partnership funding currently contributed by a range of other partners.*

Recommendation 9: *MDF should continue but with clearer focus and enhanced and specific strategic direction, which should guide investment decisions. Focus should be on:*

- Funding posts which assist in identifying and responding to local strategic and operational need
- Funding projects which identify and respond to local strategic and operational need

Recommendation 10: *MDF should be re-designated as a Challenge Fund whereby regions can bid for funding to address particular needs. Projects or initiatives should respond to museum need and local strategic priorities.*

The findings and recommendations provided above have been used to inform the development of a national strategic framework for museum development.

Recommendation 11: *MLA should extend its support to the emerging Interim Museum Development Network and work with this group and other stakeholders within the context of museum development to deliver an annual museum development conference. The focus of the conference in the short-term should be on clarifying MLA's expectations of museum development investment in staffing and activity and improving communication between MLA and MDOs. The first conference should be used by MLA, and possibly DCMS and DCLG to effectively communicate the new museum development priorities and their relationship with broader agenda to MDOs. This would serve to embed the national strategic framework within the thinking and work planning of MDOs.*

6 National Strategic Framework for Museum Development

6.1 Introduction

In developing a national strategic framework for museum development, we must acknowledge the following:

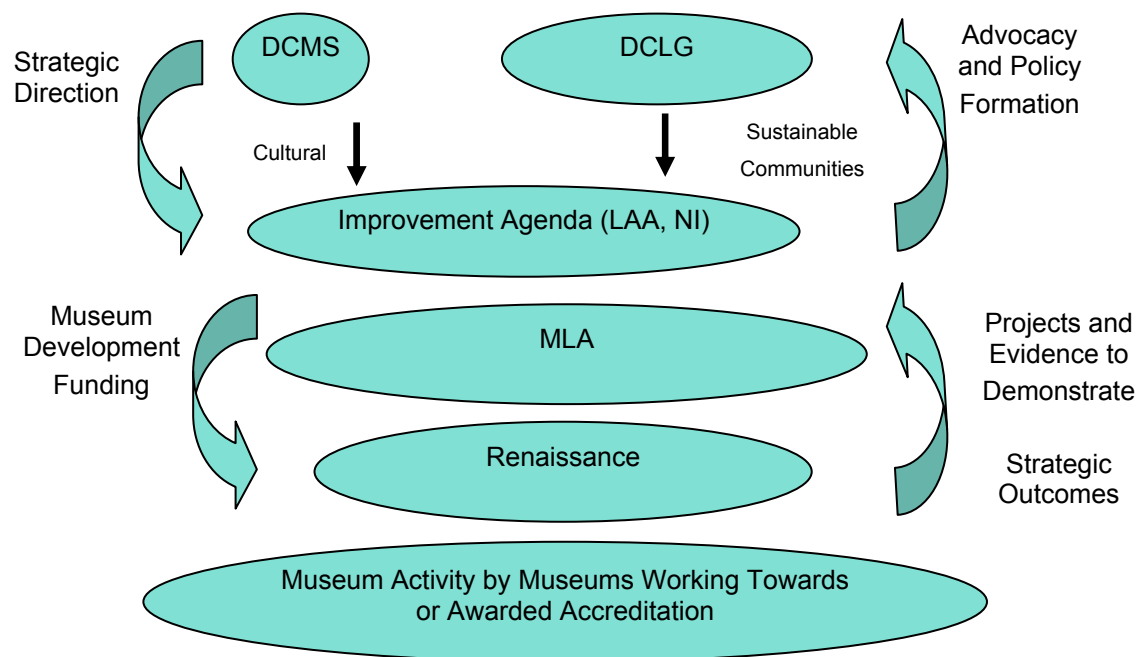
- The existing MDO network has developed organically, is well established and individual MDOs appear to be delivering valuable services to the museum community which they serve. Any alterations to this network may put at risk the benefits of the existing structure.
- Museum development is targeted at present at small local authority, independent and voluntary museums. Future museum development support must acknowledge the very different immediate pressures and priorities of these museums. For instance, and to generalise:
 - *Local authority museums* main priorities may place emphasis on demonstrating value and its contribution to local strategic priorities
 - *Larger independents which have a local authority interest* may be concerned with demonstrating value, contribution to local strategic priorities, financial sustainability via earned income and commercial activities
 - *Smaller independents and volunteer-run museums* may be concerned with financial sustainability and volunteer recruitment, management and retention. There may be little or no interest or engagement with strategic agenda.

Therefore, given the profile of beneficiaries / recipients of support, the national strategic framework must reflect ***museum need***, whilst also considering the strategic outcomes required by funding and support agencies. A flexible framework, which balances these demands is what is required and is proposed in the following sections. We aim to ensure that funded activity is strategic in nature through the application of the conceptual framework, whilst delivering benefits and support to museums via the strategic allocation of funding.

6.2 The Conceptual Framework

It is clear from the preceding chapters that the current strategic direction and leadership delivered by MLA in terms of museum development could be better focused and strengthened. Currently, MLA is working to more effectively link its activities and the outcomes of activity which it funds to key strategic drivers. This forms the basis of the conceptual framework shown below.

Chart 2: Conceptual Framework



MLA responds to the strategic direction provided by Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and increasingly to that driven by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). Therefore, these agencies sit at the top of the framework, setting the strategic agenda and monitoring progress. As indicated, this informs the Improvement Agenda within the cultural and community sectors and is measured / given focus via strategic national policies, which are translated into local or regional plans, i.e. Local Area Agreements, and through the provision of National Indicators. These, taken in their totality form the Improvement Agenda against which local authorities and the wider cultural sector work to.

MLA acts as a key intermediary between front line museum sector and strategic agencies at a regional and national level. In addition, as the key distributor of

national strategic funding programmes including Renaissance, this link is vital in ensuring that the maximum value of DCMS and other funding is secured.

It is our view that the future distribution of Museum Development Funding should be closely allied to national priorities and local interpretation thereof, in the form of Local Area Agreements and other regional / local strategic priorities. Therefore, the allocation of MDF should be focused on funding projects and initiatives which can demonstrate a quantifiable benefit to local strategic priorities (in the context of national priorities).

These initiatives will provide evidence to demonstrate the strategic impact of MDF in terms of museum activity and outputs, outcomes and impacts. When aggregated, or taken in their totality, this will provide MLA with evidence of the impact of the MDF resource against local and national priorities and as such will provide evidence which MLA can use in discussion with DCMS and DCLG, in terms of the impact of the sector, or the allocation and use of its resources.

6.3 Focus on Key Priorities

The wider Renaissance programme is currently focusing on 'Stage 2 priorities', which in turn is influenced by the 'triple bottom line' approach to sustainability, which includes consideration of social, economic and environmental issues. Renaissance funded initiatives are currently assessed against these priorities to determine if they should be funded. The priorities are structured below themes as follows:

- Social Sustainability
 - *Sustainability, Cohesive Communities, Living Places*
 - *Skills and Worklessness*
 - *Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) and Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)*
 - Health Partnerships
 - Collections Cultural Change
- Economic Sustainability
 - Tourism and 2012
 - Strategic Marketing
 - *Effective sustainable businesses*

- Environmental Sustainability
 - *Effective use of resource*

We recommend that in moving forward with the MDF, a greater emphasis should be placed on a smaller number of priorities within the themes above (i.e. those shown in red and italics). Hub managers will therefore be required to develop

business plans for MDF resources which respond to local strategic issues in the context of the priorities.

We have not identified Tourism and 2012, and Strategic Marketing as priorities for museum development support as we believe that these priorities are better served by larger initiatives. The primary target audience for museum development activity is small local authority, independent and voluntary museums. Where these museums wish to engage in activity surrounding the 2012 Olympics, or strategic marketing, this can be achieved via engagement in wider initiatives, potentially funded by the Hub.

6.4 Regional Approach to Museum Development

The current regional approach to museum development should be retained and where appropriate further supported. Museums should be encouraged and supported to address internal needs within a greater understanding of the strategic environment within which they operate, e.g. local strategic priorities.

Regional bodies, such as the Hub museums should be tasked with working with MDOs and other agencies to develop a regional understanding and response to museum need which effectively links to the local, regional and national strategic agenda. This should include coordination and engagement with strategic, local authority and wider museum sector partners.

This approach will require that MDOs have a good understanding of the local strategic agenda relevant to the area in which they are active. In many areas MDOs already have a solid understanding of local priorities, however as this is a key central feature of the framework it is critical that all MDOs have this understanding. Where additional knowledge is required in terms of priorities, this can be secured via published strategies or consultation with local authority staff. Indeed, irrespective of the level of local knowledge, it will be advantageous for MDOs to develop relationships with managers within Cultural and Community Directorates of local authorities.

Furthermore, it is likely that MDOs will be able to benefit from engagement with Hub staff in terms of developing a greater awareness of the strategic context for a region, or locality.

6.5 The Framework in Practice

We do not wish to be overly prescriptive in terms of the application of the framework, as it is the intention that each region would develop its own approach based on the profile of its museum sector, needs of the constituency and local strategic priorities. The framework can be applied to both the use of museum

development funding and provision of support by MDOs. Working examples are provided below.

6.5.1 MDF Funding

MDF support would be provided to projects which address an identified and quantified museum cluster, or sector need and can demonstrate a defined link and benefit to local strategic priorities. As a working example, consider the following:

- Needs analysis highlights demand for a particular type of activity, or initiative.
- Museums of various sizes and organisational constituency which could benefit from the project form a partnership.
- Audit of partners highlights their key strengths and areas for improvement. As a result, role of partners identified noting that the biggest partner is not always the lead.
- Consideration and explanation of links to local strategic agenda.
- Engagement with wider strategic stakeholders with an interest in the initiative.
- Project specification developed.
- Submitted for funding to appropriate agencies in advance of associated partners planning process to ensure participation.
- Project delivery including appropriate data capture throughout the project.
- Reporting on impacts.

Participation in the project / initiative must be based on the appropriateness of the partner museum and its current priorities or areas of interest. The process must be driven by a demand in the museum sector. The strength of this approach is that it

should include museums of all sizes and governance arrangements, from small voluntary museums to medium sized local authorities, working in partnership. By working together it is intended that direct operational and strategic benefits may be generated by local authorities and voluntary organisations will be engaged in the strategic sphere, some of which for the first time. The benefits of this approach are:

- Museums of varying sizes and interests working together and developing relationships for longer and wider spread benefits.
- All museums participating in the project have the potential to secure operational benefits, i.e. addressing need, whilst having an evidence based contribution to the local agenda.
- Raising the profile of what museums can achieve via strategic, agenda focused projects.
- Developing new relationships between a museum cluster or sector and strategic partners.
- Raising the profile of museums as potential delivery agents for wider community, learning, or cultural projects.
- Potential to secure additional project based funding to support initiatives based on success of the project.

To deliver this approach and benefits, the following is required:

- Clarity of communication from MLA in terms of direction and priority
- MDOs to be effectively briefed in, and engaged with the local strategic agenda
- MDOs to perform a key role in identifying museum need / project specification and engaging partners / beneficiary museums
- MDOs to work effectively with Hub museums to develop strategic business plans for identified initiatives
- Clarity in terms of evaluation techniques to record data and undertake evaluation to present the operational and strategic impact of funded projects.

6.5.2 MDF as Challenge Fund

At present, Hub Managers, with input from colleagues, MDOs and the wider sector, prepare business plans to demonstrate the use of Museum Development Funding. Broadly speaking this is an effective process, however we are concerned

that as the funding allocation is based on a formula, regions know how much funding they will receive and can therefore plan how to spend it. This current approach offers little opportunity to effectively engage wider partners in the resourcing of projects and as such can affect the strategic buy-in to projects.

We consider that there will be considerable merit in re-focusing the MDF as a Challenge Fund which invites regions to develop proposals which meet museum need and local strategic priorities. This has the following benefits:

- As MDF activity will become more strategically focussed through linking activity to priorities, the output of projects will demonstrate the impact which museums and MDF can have against the local authority agenda
- This in turn will raise the profile of museums and the contribution they can make
- This may attract partnership funding or support for projects from the local authority
- Ultimately it is intended that museum development will become imbedded in local authority structures consistently across the country.

Local authority contribution to MDF or Challenge Funded projects is not a pre-requisite, however this approach offers the opportunity to more effectively engage with wider partners in the delivery of projects.

6.5.3 Allocation of MDF

In the short-term, funding provided to support staff posts should be top-sliced to protect these MDOs or MDF funded roles. However it is our view that in the medium to long-term, all MDF becomes open to competition. Regions will still be able to bid for funding to appoint or retain these posts, however the request for funding will be assessed against all other bids. Furthermore, where demand or opportunity exists, regions would be invited to bid for funding to appoint MDOs in addition to those already in post, thereby strengthening the network.

6.5.4 Role of Museum Development Officers

The priorities highlighted above, and set at a national level should inform both the use of MDF and the activities and priorities of MDOs. It should be acknowledged that the ability of MLA to influence MDOs is affected by funding of posts, and the distribution of MDF. The role of MDOs should be considered in two areas:

1. General day-to-day activity
2. Support to allocate and use MDF

6.5.5 General Day-to-Day Activity

Given the ethos of the Framework explained above, i.e. that each region should provide its own response to museum need and strategic priority, it would be counter-productive to provide a list of activities which MLA wish MDOs to deliver. Rather, it is more relevant to acknowledge a change in approach which would be complimentary to the MDF approach, namely:

- MDOs should be encouraged to raise awareness of the strategic agenda in their region with museums. This may require translation of local government language and priority into that which is relevant to the museum
- MDOs should strive to identify areas or issues against which they can secure advocacy advantages for an individual, cluster or entire museum sector
- Where it is appropriate locally / regionally, MDOs should provide hands-on advice, if it will advance a relationship with a future aim of developing discussions with the museum around a strategic benefit. Where this is not the case, museums should be signposted to other agencies

6.5.6 Support to Allocate and Use MDF

As reported above, MDF should be re-focused and re-prioritised. Emphasis should be placed on developing projects to meet museum need whilst linking into local strategic priorities. MDOs role in terms of strategic activity could be:

- Interpreting and raising the profile of national and local strategic priorities for, and communicating to museums
- Working with museums (and clusters), and Hubs to create strategic linkages and projects
- Working with local authorities to identify opportunities for museums to play a wider role in community and cultural delivery
- Advocacy to local authorities and others regarding the impact of museums
- Responding to requests for advice and guidance on management issues

6.5.7 Museum Development Support from the Wider Sector

In some areas MDOs are spending a considerable proportion of their time providing hands-on support to museums which could be delivered by other museum sector professionals in the locality or region. It has been argued by sector representatives that MDOs should begin to move away from this type of support,

and instead provide signposting to other providers of this support. We agree with this view and suggest the following:

Hub Museums or large local authority museums should perform a stronger role in delivering collections management support to small, independent and voluntary museums on issues. This support is envisioned as being off-site, i.e. by email or telephone as far as possible. Where site visits to view collection issues are required, this could be conducted by an MDO, Hub representative or both. Clearly, this arrangement requires Hub Museums to accept this role, and a clear communication to the sector is required that Hubs have this role. This approach would free up MDO time to provide management advice and guidance to museums and focus on more strategic approaches. We acknowledge that MDOs report that hands-on queries allow relationships to develop, however, priority must be given to wider strategic issues.

MDOs can assist in facilitating this change via the creation of new, or development of existing geographic specific networks.

6.6 Measuring the Impact of the Framework

The purpose of the framework is to provide strategic direction for museum development activity and funding at a national level, which can be interpreted locally. Within this context the key driver for the framework is to build capacity across the sector whilst encouraging continuing improvement. The purpose of re-focusing the MDF is to encourage a virtuous cycle of higher quality projects and initiatives which respond to museum needs and local priorities. The concept of a Challenge Fund intends to introduce competition to further raise standards and quality of outcomes.

Measuring the existing impact of the use of MDF resources is challenging given the lack of consistent indicators of output or benefit. The framework illustrated above indicates linkages to both DCMS and DCLG priorities and as such, indicators of activity and output should correlate to these wider policies and priorities. We consider that focus should be placed on those indicators which the museum sector has the greatest scope to influence, or demonstrate influence against. However, we must also acknowledge the unique profile and needs of the museum sector in regions and defined local strategic priorities. Therefore, we consider that there should be a set of core indicators against which museum development should aim to demonstrate progress, whilst each region should be

free to identify additional indicators which are relevant to the museum sector or wider cultural / community sector.

Core Indicators – Sustainable Community Indicators

- NI 1 % of local people who believe that people from different backgrounds get on well with each other
- NI 3 Civic participation in the local area
- NI 6 Participation in regular volunteering
- NI 7 Environment for a thriving third sector
- NI 10 Visits to Museums and Galleries

Assessing Impact of Projects

Where initiatives or activities delivered via MDF or MDO intervention addresses wider issues and link to national indicators, these should be expressly stated. For instance, a project may link and demonstrate impact against:

- NI 91 Participation of 17 year olds in training or education
- NI 93 - 105 Educational attainment and progression
- NI 110 Young peoples participation in positive activities

The list above is not exhaustive.

In addition to the national indicators highlighted above, activities and support provided by MDOs and via MDF funded activity should demonstrate linkages where possible to the wider sustainable communities agenda, including:

- Community Cohesion
- Community Empowerment
- Cleaner, Greener, Safer
- Race, Cohesion and Faith
- Sense and Quality of Place

6.7 Resourcing the Framework

The main areas where work is required are:

- Communicating the proposed framework and changes to the MDF process to the sector
- Providing support to MDOs to effectively imbed the framework, i.e. answering questions and explaining the approach, and ensuring effective understanding of local strategic priorities
- Assessing proposals for funding under the MDF or Challenge Fund process
- Providing support to ensure that measures are in place to assess the benefit of MDF / Challenge Fund projects
- Advocacy on the impact of the new approach

It is our view that there will be minimal additional resources required to administer the proposed framework. The focus of the framework is on providing improved direction for museum development support, and ensuring maximum operational and strategic benefit from the use of MDF.

6.8 Administering the Framework

Regional Directors of Engagement and the Renaissance Programme Manager have critical roles in communicating the strategic emphasis of this framework to the MDO network and the wider museum sector. A series of events should be arranged to provide an opportunity for MDOs to discuss the proposed framework with MLA.

In terms of assessing initiatives seeking MDF funding, we consider that it would be appropriate for this to be undertaken by the Renaissance team at MLA, or by a panel of experts brought together annually to consider the proposals. This panel should include individuals with a firm understanding of the wider strategic environment and the museum sector.

7 Summary and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

Jura Consultants has concluded comprehensive consultation with individuals and organisations which have an active interest in the museum development work strand of Renaissance and this has served to inform our view of the changes required to deliver greater benefit.

7.2 Existing Approach

It is clear that the existing museum development approach and network is complex with different approaches being taken in each region. In all instances, museum development activity responds to a local or regional need, but assistance varies from disbursement of small grants to strategic support for advocacy to engage in local improvement agenda.

The Museum Development Fund is allocated on the basis of the number of Accredited museums in each region. This funding is used to partnership fund posts, deliver strategic and operational projects, and to fund small grants programmes. As above, this lacks strategic focus which means that it is impossible to aggregate a benefit delivered in exchange for the investment of funding. We believe that a national framework could deliver greater benefit from both MDOs and MDF.

It is clear from this process and through desk based review that museum development activity is delivering a significant benefit to small local authority, independent and voluntary museums. However, there is no strategic direction at a national, or Renaissance level and as such, we are concerned that the benefit of Renaissance funding is not being maximised. Provision of clear strategic direction with defined priorities will strengthen the approach taken to museum development and will deliver additional benefits.

7.3 National Strategic Framework

A framework which links museum development to the national agenda set by DCMS and DCLG is required. These priorities are interpreted at local or regional level within Local Area Agreements and similar. It is at this level that museum development should attempt to engage in the strategic agenda. The national framework is intended to provide the top-level approach to museum development. Regions should produce their own response to the national framework to reflect the profile of museums in the region and the strategic priorities which are relevant to the sector.

Museum development support, delivered by MDOs or MDF funded activity must be targeted at addressing identified museum need and the local strategic priorities. This has the dual benefit of addressing direct needs of the sector, whilst also demonstrating the contribution which museums can make to the local strategic agenda, which will deliver further downstream benefits in terms of advocacy and developing a wider role for the sector. Within museum development, the onus should remain with regions to understand relevant strategic priorities and the ways in which the museum sector in that area can contribute to this agenda.

Museum development activity must be more closely aligned to Renaissance priorities. This can be achieved by bringing the distribution of MDF under the same Stage 2 Priorities as Hub Business Plans are created. However, we consider that there is a need for further refinement. Museum development activity which meets the following priorities should be supported:

- Sustainability, Cohesive Communities, Living Places
- Skills and Worklessness
- Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETS) and Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP)
- Collections Cultural Change
- Effective sustainable businesses
- Effective use of resource

The MDF and MDOs should be used to support initiatives which support the achievement of these priorities. More generally, MDOs should be encouraged to pursue a strategic approach to museum development. This approach should include the identification of operational and strategic opportunity in the sector, development of initiatives and support to the sector which meet wider local strategic priorities, and engaging with strategic stakeholders to provide and deliver advocacy on behalf of the sector.

In the short-term, MDF funding which is allocated to support posts should continue. In the medium to long-term, the MDF should be re-designated as a Challenge Fund, which encourages the sector within the regions to proactively address museum need which links to the local strategic agenda. This should include partnership approaches and projects, strategic initiatives designed to transform the sector, and the development of powerful messages which illustrate the existing and potential impact of the sector.

Small grants schemes managed and distributed by MDOs in the regions, although providing direct benefits to small museums, should be phased out. These interventions are not strategic in nature, and provide limited return for intervention. That is not to say that the activities which this grant fund assists to deliver should be stopped. For instance, the small grant funds currently fund the delivery of training in some regions, albeit on a small scale. In the future, where there is a need for training, we consider that a more strategic approach to the delivery of training may provide a greater benefit for the individual recipient and the sector. It is anticipated that, in the future, larger, more transformational programmes will be delivered which creates wider benefit, rather than the benefit delivered from smaller scale activities.



APPENDIX A

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN



Consultation Undertaken

A short survey was sent to all identified MDOs in England. 30 responses were received.

In addition to the survey, indepth interviews were undertaken with the following:

Representative Agencies

- Mark Taylor, Director, Museums Association
- Keith Merrin, AIM Councillor and Director of Woodhorn, Northumberland Museum, Archive and Country Park
- Richard dePayer, AIM Councillor and Director of Macclesfield Silk Museum
- Colin Siburn, AIM Councillor and Army Museums Ogilby Trust

North West

- Emma Anderson, Hub Manager
- Andrew Backhouse, Heritage Tourism Executive
- Jo Jones, Sefton Borough Council and NWFED

North East

- Bill Griffiths, Hub Manager
- Sarah Carr, Senior Museums Development Officer
- Julie Biddlecombe, Durham County Council Museums Service

Yorkshire and Humber

- Michael Turnpenny, Museum Development Manager
- Janet Thompson, Hub Manager

London

- Andrew Holden, Director
- Ben Travers, Museum Development Manager
- Fiona Davison, Museum of London
- Rachel Tranter, Chair London Museums Group



East of England

- Bill Seaman, Hub Manager
- Natasha Hutcheson, MDO Manager
- Alan Baxter, Heritage Manager, St Edmondesbury Museum Service

South West

- Victoria Harding, Programme Manager
- Sir Christopher Wallace, Chairman of Winchester's Military Museums and Member of Hampshire Military Museums Network

East Midlands

- Claire Browne, MDO Manager
- Mark Dorrington, Nottinghamshire Archives
- Susan Lansdale, East of England Museum Service
- Liz Weston, Mansfield Museum and GOSLAM secretary

South East

- Marilyn Scott, Lightbox
- Helen Gibbons, MDO

West Midlands

- Janene Cox, Assistant Director, Culture, Staffordshire County Council
- Glynis Powell, MDO, Coventry

Leading strategically, we promote best practice in museums, libraries and archives, to inspire innovative, integrated and sustainable services for all.

