

Guidance Sheet 3

Developing projects between creative industries and museums

Summary

Both museums and the creative industries have much to gain from working together, including new audiences, new markets and new perspectives.

There are 3 main ways for museums and organisations from the creative industries to work together: with the museum as a client, buying services from a creative industries provider; with the creative industry organisation as a client, buying services from a museum; and through collaborations, which might be supported by external funding.

Building and maintaining a good relationship is the key to any successful project. Some particular factors to bear in mind when creative industry partners and museums work together include:

- A clear, jointly agreed brief for the project, clear decision-making processes and good communication
- An understanding of how your organisational cultures differ, and what both partners' agendas are
- Good marketing and promotion will ensure you get the most out of your project

You will also need a sound agreement, and this is covered in Guidance Note 4.

Contents

- 1 Why work together?
- 2 Ways of working together
- 3 Funding for collaborative projects
- 4 Collaborations: building good relationships

1 Why work together?

Both museums and the creative industries have much to gain from working together. Museums offer a rich source of content to creative industries, while creative industries can show museum collections in a new light, and bring them to new audiences. Museums offer original locations for film shoots or arts performances, and museums that are used in this way can benefit from good publicity and increased visitor numbers. Visual artists showing their work in museums can make people look again at the building or collection, while taking inspiration from the museum and seeing their own reputation enhanced. Museums enjoy high levels of public trust and are associated with high-quality art and design: creative businesses working with museums benefit from these positive associations, while offering their own reputation for innovation and modernity to organisations that are sometimes perceived as being stale and old-fashioned.

For creative businesses, working with museums offers new income streams, from commercial ventures and public funding. And museums may also generate income through working with the creative industries, from providing services and joint ventures.

2 Ways of working together

Both museums and creative businesses can act as client or provider in conventional, commercially-based relationships. But there are also possibilities for collaborations and joint ventures.

Museums as clients: the museum buys a product or service from a creative business. This might be design for a display, a promotional film for use on social media, or digital media to interpret an exhibition.

Creative business as client: the creative business buys a product or service from a museum. This might be an image to reproduce in a publication or greetings card, the use of the building for a location shoot, or using the museum and collection as the setting for a game.

- Historic venues and landscapes are regularly used as locations for film and TV. Crom Estate in County Fermanagh and Castle Howard in Yorkshire have both been used recently by the BBC as locations. In both instances, the venues maximised the publicity from this through their websites and used it as an opportunity to market themselves. [To find out more about marketing the Crom Estate click here for the case study](#)

Museums and creative industries as collaborators: this might involve developing a product together, or applying for funding jointly to enable a creative business to produce work in or for the museum. Examples include:

- 'Making it': Craft NI worked with the Ulster Museum to provide a two-year placement for a designer-maker. The maker got space and equipment to support their work and in return they developed and ran events for the museum. [To find out more click here for the case study](#)
- The Irish Linen Centre is working with one of the last commercial Irish linen producers to create a range based on historical designs from its collection, to sell in the linen centre shop. [To find out more click here to read the case study](#)
- Derry City Council Heritage and Museum Service and Uproar Comics worked together to produce a comic based on the rebellion of Sir Cathair O'Doherty in 1608. The comic was aimed at engaging younger audiences in the story and the related collections. [To find out more click here for the case study](#)
- Set designers and theatre producers worked with the National Railway Museum in York during a large redisplay to help them bring a sense of drama and storytelling to displays and interpretation
- Dancers worked with primary school children at the Collection in Lincolnshire to create new pieces of dance based on short stories or poems inspired by the museum's collection
- In England, the Arts Council-funded Museummaker project supported craft makers and museums to work together. Craft makers were able to raise the profile of their work and open up new commercial and creative opportunities; museums found new ways of interpreting collections and engaging audiences

3 Funding for collaborative projects

Museums are eligible to apply for projects involving visual and performing artists through the Arts Council of Northern Ireland's small grants programme. Project funding of up to £10,000 is available for projects including new commissions. Funding has to be spent within a twelve-month period, and priority is given to projects in areas of deprivation. For further details, see <http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding/scheme/small-grants-programme>. [Arts Council Northern Ireland also had other funding streams that might be suitable for collaborations between certain areas of the creative industries and museums: http://www.artscouncil-ni.org/funding/for-organisations](#)

Working with a partner from one of the creative industries could be the key to unlocking funding opportunities for museums. Partnerships are likely to open up a wider range of non-traditional funding opportunities. For example, the Wellcome Trust Arts Awards support

imaginative and experimental arts projects that explore biomedical science:
<http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/Funding/Public-engagement/Funding-schemes/Arts-Awards/>

The Northern Ireland Museums Council operates a small grant programme for local museums, which assists projects geared towards the protection and interpretation of collections, and encouraging wider public participation with museums. For further details, see <http://www.nimc.co.uk/grants/>

In addition, a number of organisations representing different areas of the creative industries also have funding streams which may be appropriate for these sorts of projects. They include Screen NI: <http://www.northernirelandscreen.co.uk/categories/5/investment-and-funding.aspx> and Craft NI: <http://craftni.org/>

4 Collaborations: building good relationships

Some of what will make a collaboration work is down to having a clear and sound agreement and this is covered by Guidance Sheet 4 in this series. This section deals with some general points that will help lay the foundations for good working relationships.

Clarity For any project to be successful you need to have a clear idea of what you want to achieve and what role each partner is going to play, so a clear brief for any work is essential.

Time Like working with any partner or client, ensuring that there is a decent amount of time for the project is also important. If you are working with a new partner or client, you need to take time to get to know each other and how you both work. If the project involves others, for example working with a local or specialist group, make sure you leave time for the both the museum and the creative industry partner to develop relationships.

Communication It is also important to have clearly identified members of staff for partners to liaise with. It might be also be useful to invite a range of staff from the project partners to a meeting so they can meet other people from the partner organisation who they might be working with, or just to get to know each other a little better and raise the profile of the work within the organisations.

Organisational cultures Museums and creative businesses are likely to have different working practices and workplace cultures. This need not prevent you working together effectively, but you need to be aware of any aspects that might be problematic and agree in advance how you will handle them – for example make it clear how quickly you will be able to respond to suggestions or requests. If other people need to be involved in the decision-making process and this will slow things down, make sure your partner is aware of this.

Recognising and accommodating different agendas Both partners need to be clear about how the project fits with their business plans. Your aims for the project do not need to be the same, but they do need to be compatible. Have a conversation about this and be aware of differing agendas. Think about how you will ensure that no one's aspirations get lost in the process.

Decision making Be clear about how the project will be managed, and who can take decisions on behalf of either party. For simple projects, it will be enough to have one person from the museum and one representative of the creative business (or the artist or maker) managing the project. Larger or externally funded collaborations may require a steering group. Ensure your management arrangements are proportionate to the size and complexity of the project.

Duration Discuss at the outset whether your partnership is fixed-term or is more open-ended. The most helpful model may be to agree to work together on a specific, short project, with the aim of having a conversation at the end of that project about whether there is more you can do together in future.

Marketing No matter what sort of business or organisation you work for, it is important to get the most out of the projects and pieces of work you are involved in, good marketing and promotion will help to realise the benefits of these projects. In many cases, at the end of working together museums and their creative industry partner are likely to have a product. Whatever that is - an event or performance, a publication, an exhibition, merchandise to sell in the shop, online content, an app - all parties need to think about how to brand, market and promote that product. It is important in all these areas to make sure any activity reflects the values of the partner organisations. If the project has been funded by an external body, you may need to discuss aspects of marketing, promotion and branding with them; check the terms of your funding agreement.

Several of these points are elaborated upon in Guidance Sheet 4.

