

Irish Museums Association
Strategic Plan 2018-21

Approved by the IMA board of directors on 7 December 2017.

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INTRODUCTION

The Irish Museums Association's Strategic Plan 2018-2021 clarifies the association's mission, vision and values while outlining a series of aims that will advocate for our members and strengthen the museum sector in Ireland.

It builds on the success of previous strategic plans and reflects the changing environment of the museum landscape. As evidenced by the all-Ireland *Survey of Irish Museums 2016*, we have seen tremendous progress in how our museums function and engage with the communities they serve. The coming years will bring further significant developments as there is an increased emphasis on museums to demonstrate their value to society

In a period of almost unprecedented and rapid change - socially, technologically, politically and culturally - museums are adapting to meet the requirements of the modern world. The remit of the museum is becoming broader and we are seeing increased demand for leadership and intellectual rigor in a landscape where these values are being questioned. It has become necessary for museums to redefine their remits, their functions, and their strategies. Inclusivity, diversity, civic responsibility, participation; these are all principles that are at the forefront of contemporary museum practice and which museums are guided by. Museums are valued as places of inspiration and of knowledge. They mirror society and become instruments of change, development and of progress. They use their place as 'safe spaces for unsafe dialogue' to become institutions that foster social cohesion and peace.

However, our museums can sometimes struggle to maintain a strategic perspective when faced with day-to-day operational and financial challenges. While the economic climate has improved in recent years, many museums across Ireland are still facing straitened circumstances, placing their collections and programmes at risk. This brings with it necessary discussions around access, storage, sustainable collecting, staff capacity, ethics, and maintaining our research and knowledge base. The IMA welcomes the Creative Ireland programme and forthcoming publication by the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht of Culture 2025 and the Heritage Council's National Heritage Plan in 2018. These key policy documents will provide the groundwork for the development of a museums policy for the Republic of Ireland, to complement the Northern Ireland Museums Policy and to further assist the growth and development of the museum sector.

We believe in the positive impact of museums on society, providing a place for learning, contemplation and discourse and their contribution to a healthy society. The success of *Ireland 2016* is testimony to the vibrancy and creativity of our sector but we perhaps have not been as successful as other sectors in promoting our worth. As we enter the latter years of the Decade of Centenaries and the potential impact of the exit of Northern Ireland from the European Union, the challenge remains to become more successful advocates for the strength of museums in presenting our shared history and identity while fostering the effective cultural links that currently exist. It is in this uncertain climate that we have framed the vision and direction of the Association for the next three years.

The Strategic Plan 2018-2021 intends to strengthen the association's role as an independent key player in the cultural sector in Ireland. It commits the association to providing equal benefits to museums across the Island, ensuring the breadth and range of museums and museum practice is represented within and by the association.

Additionally, it commits the association to continue to promote the exchange of knowledge and support through collaborative practice, and enable the debate of current issues. It aims to inform and promote dialogue with stakeholders on current museum practice and developments, and enhance engagement with these.

The Strategic Plan 2018-2021 is informed by our members and the numerous collection-based organisations we collaborate with across Ireland - ranging from small community-led centres to National Cultural Institutions. It intends to meet the needs of these stakeholders, supporting and promoting the value of museums to society. It will provide guidance to the association, our members and the wider community of the priorities for the museum sector. It will be reviewed periodically to ensure that it is a 'living' document and updated as necessary throughout the period it covers.

The success of the Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 will be determined by the investment of our members and wider stakeholders who support the programme and activities of the Irish Museums Association.

OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

Our vision

To be the representative voice for the museum sector, inspiring and supporting museum development across Ireland.

Our Mission

The Irish Museums Association (IMA) is an all-Ireland non-profit organisation dedicated to the development of the museum sector so that everyone, visitors and practitioners, can enjoy the maximum cultural, social and educational benefit. It helps develop and promote excellence in museum practice, the gathering and exchange of knowledge, identifies issues of concern to the museum community, and advocates the valuable role of museums in society.

Our Values

Excellence: We encourage and promote excellence in the museum sector, creating relevant experiences for our members and providing a platform for contemporary discourse around museum practice.

Inclusivity: We recognise the diversity of communities that are served by our museums and the role of museums in fostering a more sustainable future across Ireland.

Collaboration: We believe in the power of partnerships and alliances across sectors and the strength of speaking as a united voice to promote and develop the field as a whole.

OUR FOCUS

The Irish Museums Association has identified the main imperatives for the museum sector that will inform our work over the duration of the Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021:

Long-term, sustainable care of Ireland’s collections:

Museums are the record of our past, the touchpoint for our present and our legacy for future generations. We advocate for the long-term care and interpretation of our cultural heritage, enabling our museums to protect our tangible and intangible heritage for future generations. Assisting museums to effectively manage their responsibility of care of our collections will remain a key focus of the Irish Museums Association.

Increased access and participation:

We believe that the museum sector has a responsibility to engage and inspire people of all ages and backgrounds and boost creativity and innovation. The Irish Museums Association will aim to engage across sectors and disciplines in an inclusive dialogue, ensuring the makeup of contemporary Irish society is reflected in our activities.

The museum of the future:

In an evolving world, museums are continually required to prove their contribution to society. The Irish Museums Association will reflect this by positioning itself as a centre for the museum community and an active player in the wider cultural field. It will be proactive in leading the museum sector, encouraging innovation, engaging different perspectives, challenging assumptions, and promoting exemplary ethical and governance standards.

STRATEGIC APPROACH

Promote the contribution of museums to society.

Encourage global thinking, embracing our shared heritage and our cultural diversity

Advocate and support increased professionalism in the field.

Ensure the association's sustainability and growth.

ACTIONS

Develop, inform and disseminate good standards of practice around the development and care of collections:

Support and promote the Heritage Council of Ireland's Museums Standards Programme of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council's Accreditation Scheme UK.

Work with appropriate partners to highlight conservation and preservation priorities, ethical practice and to improve documentation, through the dissemination and exchange of knowledge and research.

Disseminate and support global exchanges of knowledge through engagement and alliances with international organisations, identifying and sharing international trends, best practices and innovations to strengthen the Irish museum sector.

Celebrate museums:

Promote the role of museums in the community and an understanding of the work that they do.

Provide a programme of activities that celebrates and supports the achievements of museums in Ireland.

Encourage increased engagement with our audiences, while continuing to seek out and embrace new audiences.

Foster museum leadership:

Develop and grow a dynamic, active and supportive membership.

Provide opportunities for continued development of museum practice

Commission and disseminate research.

Support and empower the next generation of museum practitioners.

Advocate increased access and engagement:

Enable a fluid dialogue of museum practice and foster collaborative activities within the museum community across Ireland, along with the wider cultural and heritage sectors.

Deliver an online platform to enable members to access and exchange relevant content.

Lobby for improved intellectual and physical accessibility to museums.

Actively engage and enable two-way dialogue with practitioners outside the museum community to identify trends, models and insights of practice that provide a broader perspective.

Procure and maintain a level of funding to ensure long-term sustainability of the association.

Secure adequate resourcing of the association to provide a high level of service to museums in Ireland.

Ensure the association is committed to the highest governance standards.

Leverage and strengthen relationships with existing stakeholders to identify collaborations and opportunities.

DELIVERY AND MONITORING

The Strategic Plan 2018 – 2021 will inform the Irish Museums Association’s public programme and work-plan, prepared annually by the Director of Operations, guided by the board of directors, and informed by stakeholders. It will be revised and monitored in the following manner:

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| - Strategic Plan: | Annually | Board of Directors, informed by strategic review committee |
| - Programme delivery: | Bi-monthly | Board of Directors, informed by the director of operations |
| - Budget and resources management: | Quarterly | Finance committee |

APPENDIX – DETAILED ACTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE ANNUAL DELIVERY PROGRAMME OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN

Develop, inform and disseminate good standards of practice around the development and care of collections:

Support and promote the Heritage Council of Ireland's Museums Standards Programme of Ireland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council's Accreditation Scheme UK.

- Liaise on a regular basis with HC and NIMC to align our provision of training and CPD with their programmes
- Develop awareness and promote the MSPI and Accreditation Scheme UK to members at all available opportunities.
- Lobby for wide-spread acceptance of MSPI and Accreditation Scheme UK as a 'stamp of excellence' by stakeholders.

Work with appropriate partners to highlight conservation and preservation priorities, ethical practice and to improve documentation, through the dissemination and exchange of knowledge and research.

- Strengthen and fully engage with ICRI (Institute of Conservator Restorers of Ireland) and key practitioners within museum documentation and collection management to develop open access guidelines of good practice.

Disseminate and support global exchanges of knowledge through engagement and alliances with international organisations, identifying and sharing international trends, best practices and innovations to strengthen the Irish museum sector.

- Continue to work with NEMO, MA UK, EGMUS and similar organisations, acting as a point of contact in Ireland for museum practice.
- Produce and grow a scheduled monthly round-up of news, developments and opportunities for the sector
- Produce an annual journal which documents the museum sector's activities.
- Redevelop the IMA online platform to - among other issues – improve the news and information area.

Celebrate museums:

Promote the role of museums in the community and an understanding of the work that they do.

- This should inform all activities of the association.
- Advocate for and support initiatives that promote the work of museums, such as Heritage Week and Culture Night

Provide a programme that celebrates and supports the achievements of museums in Ireland.

- Continue to provide a programme that includes forums and conferences which, while inquisitive and questioning of their practice, is supportive of museums.
- Disseminate examples of best practice.

- Seek to inspire practitioners and equip them with the tools to enable them to be at the forefront of research, collection management, and learning for the benefit of society.

Encourage increased engagement with our audiences, while continuing to seek out and embrace new audiences.

- Represent the museum sector nationally and internationally: public speaking, meetings, and other events that may have a wider platform.
- Promote the work of museums to a wider audience.
- Actively seek opportunities to engage with other sectors.

Foster museum leadership:

Develop and grow a dynamic, active and supportive membership.

- Ensure membership more accurately reflects the museum landscape.
- Improve awareness of membership of the association.
- Improve transparency around governance of the association.

Provide opportunities for continued development of museum practice.

- Deliver a training programme that will adequately provide skills to museum workers.

Commission and disseminate research.

- Continue to support the collection of quantitative and qualitative data on the museum sector.
- Secure funding for an Irish Museums Survey to be carried out in 2020.

Support and empower the next generation of museum practitioners.

- Engage and collaborate with 3rd level institutions and young professionals to encourage development of their practice.
- Promote a two-way dialogue and learning exchanges within our membership.

Advocate for improved access and engagement:

Enable a fluid dialogue of museum practice and foster collaborative activities within the museum community across Ireland.

- Programme, support and encourage opportunities for the museum sector to engage across disciplines, geographical locations, and levels of expertise.
- Continue to provide a programme that looks outward rather than inward, reflecting the diversity of museum practice and engagement with our cultural heritage.
- Strengthen relationships with the national cultural institutions governing boards to identify key areas of development.

- Support smaller networks that favour the museum sector.

Deliver an online platform to enable members to access and exchange relevant content.

- Improve the IMA's website to allow for an easier user experience.
- Increase communications with members through our online platforms.

Lobby for improved intellectual and physical accessibility to museums.

- Continue to disseminate good practice in museums that address these areas.
- Explicitly identify this area as a key criterion to be addressed by the IMA's programme.

Actively engage and enable mutually beneficial dialogues with practitioners outside the museum community to identify trends, models and insights of practice that provide a broader perspective.

- Attend conferences and related events that relate to the wider cultural sector, identifying issues and trends at an early stage.
- Raise the profile of the association to enable it to be an active player in conversations around the cultural sector.
- Continue to provide and improve the association's conferences and forums.
- Promote global thinking.

Procure and maintain a level of funding that will ensure long-term sustainability of the association.

Secure resourcing of the association to provide a high level of service to museums in Ireland.

- Diversify funding and support networks
- Embrace flexible business practices and scalable programmes to create a more proactive approach to a changing environment.
- Programme with Increased lead-in time to enable project-specific public funding.
- Secure additional resources to promote and increase membership.

Ensure the association is committed to the highest governance standards.

- Maintain registration of the Governance Code for Voluntary, Community and Charitable Organisations.
- Monitor and implement new regulations as they arise.

Leverage and strengthen relationships with existing stakeholders to identify collaborations and opportunities for the association and the museum community.

- Strengthen dialogue with existing decision-makers at governmental level in the Republic of Ireland, such as DCHG and HC.
- Develop relationships with decision-makers at governmental level in Northern Ireland, such as NIMC and NI Executive.
- Build and embrace partnerships and collaborations within and outside of the museum sector.
- Identify and invite key regional and disciplinary advisors to inform the IMA's programme of activities.

- Foster engagement and support of the association and its activities by leaders and influencers within the museum sector and associated fields, particularly the wider cultural and heritage sectors
- Develop relations with the Department of Education with the aim of encouraging the inclusion of museums in the school curricula. (J McC amendment)