

Template 2: Collections Rationalisation Plan

Please note that the commentary given in italics is for guidance and does not form part of the template.

Name of Museum

Prepared by/date:

Agreed by/date:

Next review date:

Statement of purpose and how collections are used to achieve the purpose

[Insert statements]

Commentary

The museum's statement of purpose/mission statement will include the key concepts regarding the collections and public benefit which will underpin the creation of the Plan. For example:

'The County Museum collects, documents, cares for and provides access to collections which we use to inspire and educate the public in the history of the county and its people.'

A statement on how collections can be used to achieve the museum's mission might be:

'The collections and information about them are used to achieve our mission via displays, interpretation, formal and informal learning events and activities and we support research into the collections by staff, volunteers and the public.'

Stage 1 Foundation for Collections Rationalisation

Definition of Collections Rationalisation

[Insert definition]

Commentary

This is the definition used in the Principles of Rationalisation.

Principles of Collections Rationalisation

[Attach copy of Principles of Rationalisation]

Commentary

It is crucial to test the plan against the Principles at all stages of its creation and implementation.

Overview of collections

[Insert statement]

Commentary

A summary paragraph or table describing the entire collection using parameters which include the type of material, numbers, display, storage and loans should be inserted. Such a summary is likely to exist or be easily created from data already held by the museum. This summary forms part of the context against which rationalisation will take place.

Collections in relation to Forward Plan and Acquisition and Disposal policy

[Insert statement]

Commentary

The Forward Plan and Acquisition and Disposal policy should be consistent with the museum's intentions to rationalise its collections. If this is the case, the statement should confirm that fact. An examination of these documents may however reveal inconsistencies which should be mentioned in the statement. For example, the planned expansion or contraction of storage areas may impact on the preferred rationalisation options. Likewise, those parts of the collections intended for development or disposal when the Acquisition and Disposal was created may not now be considered as priorities.

[Attach copies of the Forward Plan and Acquisition and Disposal Policy]

Key collection management and/or other issues affecting public benefit which have motivated this plan

[Insert statement]

Commentary

In order to build a firm case for rationalisation, it is vital to demonstrate that it has been motivated by specific issues affecting collections management and public benefit. Such an approach is likely to have a strong appeal to governing bodies and funding organisations rather than one which focuses on benefitting the comfort and convenience of staff and their personal views of the collections.

Intended outcomes from collections rationalisation related to public benefit

[Insert statement]

Commentary

Based on the issues identified in the previous paragraph, this statement provides an opportunity to describe the public benefits which will result from rationalisation. The clear articulation of these benefits within the plan can also be called upon when communication and consultation on rationalisation is taking place (see Stage 3).

Overview of collections rationalisation potential

[Insert table]

Commentary

The table (example given below) should cover all the museum's collections including and loans in and loans out. By taking this approach, it can be demonstrated that rationalisation is being planned on the basis of a complete overview of the collection rather than from a partial and biased viewpoint.

EXAMPLE

Collection areas	Estimated numbers in all	Rationalisation potential
Art	300 20 loans out	Yes Loans out
Natural history	100	Yes
Transport	20 5 loans in	Yes Loans in
Archaeology	2000	No

Stage 2 Preparing for collections rationalisation

Methodology to identify items rationalisation including assessment criteria

[Insert statement]

Commentary

The criteria should be derived from the motivations for rationalisation identified in Stage 1. The number of criteria should be limited to avoid the assessment process becoming unwieldy. It should also be recognised that the criteria may not be equally relevant to all elements of the collections. Including levels to indicate how far the item under assessment meets the criteria is advisable. Training in the assessment process should be provided for all individuals undertaking this work.

Forms used to assess items for rationalisation

[Attach copies of forms]

Commentary

Depending on the type of material being assessed, more than one form may be required. The forms should incorporate the criteria identified in the methodology. It is suggested that the design of the form is kept as simple as possible to reduce the risk of inconsistency in the assessment process. The name of the assessor and the date of assessment should be recorded on the form.

Staff/volunteers who will work on collections rationalisation

[Insert statement]

Commentary

Rationalisation will inevitably involve several individuals and may require new staff members or volunteers to be recruited. The names and job titles of personnel should be listed together with an indication of the role they will undertake in the rationalisation process and the timescales. If personnel are to be recruited, this should also be noted together with the planned dates of their work.

Overall management responsibility and reporting arrangements for rationalisation

[Insert statement]

Commentary

The individual with overall responsibility for the rationalisation project should be identified and an indication of how progress with rationalisation will be reported by this person to more senior levels of the organisation should be given. A note of how progress on rationalisation will be reported to this person including frequency should also be included.

Additional resources required

[Insert statement]

Commentary

The implementation of rationalisation may require resources such as finance, space, equipment, training and specialist advice which are not already in place. Inevitably, training in the various elements of rationalisation will be necessary especially for newly recruited staff or volunteers and associated collection handling could also be required. The potential origin of any additional financial resources should be identified and timescales given if appropriate. It may also be necessary to identify and prepare adequate space to accommodate both personnel and the material under assessment. New equipment such as shelving, laptops or cameras may be required. Finally, the need for specialist advice in relation to particular parts of the collections should be identified.

Any existing resources which will be utilised to support rationalisation should be noted to demonstrate that the needs of the project have been considered.

Overall timescale
[Insert statement]

Commentary

The anticipated completion date for the rationalisation work should be given together with any factors affecting this timescale. A more detailed breakdown will be included in the basic work plan at the end of this Stage.

Published standards and guidance
[Insert list]

Commentary

A list of the relevant standards and guidance should be included and a check should be made that these items are available in the museum for reference. A list of key items is given at the end of this document.

Basic work plan
[Insert work plan]

Commentary

By creating a simple work plan, the museum will identify those collections which will be subject to rationalisation, the actions required to achieve rationalisation, the personnel who will carry out the work and the timescale within which the activity will take place. An example of how the work plan might look is given below. The work plan could become the basis of a more detailed rationalisation implementation plan which could be created after rationalisation has been tested on a small group of material (see Stage 3)

Example

Collection area	Action	Personnel	Timescale

Stage 3 Implementing Collections Rationalisation

Testing the implementation process

Before rationalisation is formally implemented, it will be tested on a small group of material and the process will be refined as appropriate.

[Insert statement]

Commentary

The statement should briefly identify:

- *the material on which the test will be made and the reasons for its selection*
- *the timescale for the test period*
- *the personnel participating in the work*

Testing should include using the assessment form and the consideration of decisions on rationalisation options. Depending on the type of material, other elements of implementation could be covered such as ethical and legal matters.

Communication and consultation

Communication and consultation both inside and outside the museum will take place throughout the rationalisation process.

[Insert statement on plans and potential action]

Commentary

Collections rationalisation can become a sensitive area of activity for museums. To avoid the consequences of misleading and inaccurate information being circulated, it is crucial that consultation and communication are planned to take place throughout the rationalisation process. Research on disposal published by the MA in 2007 (A public consultation on museum disposal) provides useful information on probable public reactions and suggests how consultation could be approached.

Key issues to be examined when preparing the statement include:

Purpose

- *to demonstrate openness about the process*
- *to be a mechanism for advocacy for the museum*
- *to provide understanding of the process*
- *to seek views both within and outside the museum*
- *to provide a channel for involvement in the process*

Who

Consultation and communication should involve

- *staff /volunteers /Friends /groups /funders /donors /stakeholders /special interest groups /media*
- *expert advisers*

Content

- *consistent with the principles of rationalisation and the rationalisation plan*
- *appropriate to the audience*
- *focus on the motivation and public benefits identified in Stage 1*
- *include information about the process and the evidence emerging from the consultation itself*

How

Methods which should be appropriate to the intended audience might include: open meetings /correspondence /press releases / museum website/newsletters / formal and informal presentations /exhibitions-physical and virtual /events and activities.

The resulting feedback can be collected and used to inform future consultation and communication activities.

Implementation of rationalisation will follow the process in the Museum Accreditation standard and the MA's Disposal Toolkit but allow for differences in the case of options such as loans and handling material.

Main steps in implementation:

a Assessment of items including additional research and specialist advice

b Checking ethical and legal considerations

c Selection of items

d Deciding on a specific rationalisation option

e Taking formal decisions on rationalisation

f Seeking a new owner if necessary

g Confirming new arrangements or re-evaluating options for rationalisation

Commentary

Brief further details on each of the steps a-g should be inserted including indentifying who is responsible for the task, the process to be used and any associated issues of particular significance for the museum such as complex ethical or legal matters. Recent research published by the Collections Trust (Collections and Governance: a practical guide 2011) highlights legal issues concerning ownership and disposal under various governance arrangements.

[Attach a copy of the disposal flowchart from *Disposal Toolkit*, 2008]

Commentary

The MA's Disposal flowchart provides outline of the process for the permanent disposal of an item. A different process will take place when other rationalisation options are followed for example the return of loans in.

Stage 4 Post-rationalisation action

Amend museum's plans, policies and processes as necessary.

Evaluate the implementation of collections rationalisation.

[Insert statement to confirm that both actions will take place]

Commentary

Undertaking rationalisation may highlight the need to amend plans, policies as well as collections care and management processes with the aim of ensuring consistency across the board and avoiding confusion. Such amendments should also aim to avoid repeating the actions which prompted in the need for rationalisation. Any changes should be properly authorised and be communicated to staff and volunteers. The timing for the review of plans and policies may mean that amendments arising from rationalisation work may take place during the process rather than after rationalisation has been completed. A formal evaluation of the rationalisation process will inform any future rationalisation exercises.