

## Museum Information Management: Adapting to Change

### Quick Guide 5: Maximising Opportunities

#### Introduction

Many museums are experiencing a reduction in resources and/or changes to their status or governance. Whatever the size, type, location or funding of your museum, it is likely that it will need to withstand the impact of significant change in the economic environment.

Effective information management is a vital tool in helping museums make important decisions and maintain confidence in all aspects of their work. These decisions may not always relate to risks and issues. Organisational change may give rise to opportunities which it will be important to identify and take full advantage of, in order that your museum might not simply survive, but thrive.

Mergers may provide access to new audiences or corporate resources; separations may clarify your museum's goals and enable your museum to make autonomous decisions. Identifying, understanding and making best use of opportunities will also enable your museum to build a sense of ownership and confidence in relation to change, as opposed to experiencing it passively or reactively. This will help engage staff and sustain morale during potentially turbulent times.

This is the fifth in a series of six *Quick Guides*, aimed at helping museums identify and address the kinds of information management issues likely to arise from the kind of change now being experienced across the sector. They are designed to help you understand and tackle the impact of the external economic environment from the perspective of change management, taking a pro-active approach to helping your museum develop and sustain effective information management.

#### Scope

*Quick Guide 5: Maximising Opportunities* provides you with:

- A means of **identifying information management opportunities** which might rise as a result of changes within your museum
- An understanding of **how to evaluate and prioritise the opportunities** identified
- Guidance for **developing potential information management opportunities**
- References for further reading

#### Principles

To maximise opportunities presented by organisational change you will need to:

1. **Identify** possible opportunities
2. Evaluate the **feasibility** of exploiting an opportunity.
3. Evaluate the **potential** of an opportunity
4. **Prioritise** those opportunities which appear to have the most potential
5. **Identify actions** to help develop and make best use of opportunities
6. **Monitor** the progress of these and other new opportunities.

#### Identifying opportunities

*Quick Guide 1: Understanding Change* provides a reminder of the eight key areas of information management. For each of these areas, consider the opportunities which may be presented as a result of change to your museum's status. Examples of the opportunities which might arise as a consequence of separation from a parent body are provided below. There may be numerous opportunities in each area which will vary according to your museum and its circumstances.

<b>Information management area</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>
1: Enabling effective information management and access	Information policies and procedures can be developed to meet the specific needs of the museum.
2: Informing strategic thinking	The museum's information management will be able to connect more closely with corporate strategy which does not have to cater for the needs of a larger organisation.
3: Gathering and using management information	Management information requirements may be more focused and relevant to the core business of the museum.
4: Developing cohesive services and products	The museum's information resources will be able to establish an independent identity without being placed in the context of non-relevant online resources.
5: Developing effective records management	The museum can devise an online information management storage schema which reflects its specific information requirements. Not sure what is meant by this, clarify with Alice
6: Developing and sharing skills	The museum may be able to focus its training effort on information management skills which are more relevant to the museum's needs.
7: Recognising the cost and value of information	The museum may be able to develop independent measures to reduce staff turnover in areas where specialist knowledge is a high priority.
8: Fulfilling legal and ethical responsibilities	There may be an opportunity to target training and resources to develop best practice in areas specific to museum responsibilities.

### **Evaluating opportunities**

Your museum will need to exercise caution with regard to the number and nature of the opportunities it pursues. Some opportunities may look attractive but would not provide a return in the investment required to develop them. Others may appear mundane but could have an enabling effect on different areas of the museum.

In order to evaluate the opportunities you have identified, score them on a scale of 1 - 5 for feasibility and potential, where 1 = difficult / low potential and 5 = easy / high potential. Use a format such as the one below to record your scores, providing notes to explain your scores where appropriate.

<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Feasible ?</b>	<b>Potential</b>	<b>Notes</b>
1: Information policies and procedures can be developed to meet the specific needs of the museum.	5	3	The return on this will take time as policies and procedures are implemented but your museum will work more effectively.
2: The museum's information management will be able to connect more closely with corporate strategy which does not have to cater for the needs of a larger organisation.	5	3	The potential for more focused working will take time to provide a return but will enable your museum to focus resources.

Opportunity	Feasible ?	Potential	Notes
3: Management information requirements may be more focused and relevant to the core business of the museum.	3	3	In reality your museum may have multiple funding streams with more than one stakeholder requiring management information.
4: The museum's information resources will be able to establish an independent identity without being placed in the context of non-relevant online resources.	4	4	The potential to improve recognition and quality of information resources is real, but will require initial investment and a clear business case.
5: The museum can devise an online information management storage schema which reflects its specific information requirements.	3	4	This will depend on the availability of an appropriate ICT infrastructure which has been identified as a risk.
6: The museum may be able to focus its training effort on information management skills which are more relevant to the museum's needs.	3	4	The gain from this may be deferred due to the need to redefine staff roles and fill urgent skills gaps arising from separation
7: The museum may be able to develop independent measures to reduce staff turnover in areas where specialist knowledge is a high priority.	3	3	There will be a need to accomplish this quickly in the face of organisational change; it may be difficult to identify priorities quickly.
8: There may be an opportunity to target training and resources to develop best practice in areas specific to museum responsibilities.	4	5	This will be a necessary process in order to ensure that the separation process does not put the museum and its collections at risk.

### Prioritising opportunities

In order to make the best use of opportunities which arise your museum will need to be selective about how many opportunities it chooses to pursue at any one time. It is likely that you will not have sufficient resources to develop all the initiatives you have identified and for that reason it will be important to prioritise the opportunities available to your museum.

As with your risk management, one means of doing this is to multiply the scores you have assigned each opportunity; this will give you a ranking of the most feasible and productive opportunities available to you. This means that the risks identified in our scenario would be ranked as follows:

Opportunity	Feasible ?	Potential	Ranking score
8: There may be an opportunity to target training and resources to develop best practice in areas specific to museum responsibilities.	4	5	20

Opportunity	Feasible ?	Potential	Ranking score
4: The museum's information resources will be able to establish an independent identity without being placed in the context of non-relevant online resources.	4	4	16
1: Information policies and procedures can be developed to meet the specific needs of the museum.	5	3	15
2: The museum's information management will be able to connect more closely with corporate strategy which does not have to cater for the needs of a larger organisation.	5	3	15
5: The museum can devise an online information management storage schema which reflects its specific information requirements.	3	4	12
6: The museum may be able to focus its training effort on information management skills which are more relevant to the museum's needs.	3	4	12
3: Management information requirements may be more focused and relevant to the core business of the museum.	3	3	9
7: The museum may be able to develop independent measures to reduce staff turnover in areas where specialist knowledge is a high priority.	3	3	9

Opportunities with low scores need not be discarded. When reviewing the actions required to support opportunities as described in the next section it may be possible to identify opportunities which can be progressed even slowly through low-cost, low-effort activities.

### Managing and developing

In order to develop any opportunity it will be necessary to determine the actions which will be required to achieve a successful outcome. Essentially any opportunity can be turned into a formal project and managed accordingly. However an overview of the actions required can help identify synergies between opportunities, flag up dependencies and begin to identify resource requirements. Examples of actions are:

Opportunity	Action
8: There may be an opportunity to target training and resources to develop best practice in areas specific to museum responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify key areas of professional responsibility across the museum</li> <li>• Carry out a skills audit for relevant staff to identify gaps</li> <li>• Develop a skills development programme aimed at establishing best practice.</li> </ul>
4: The museum's information resources will be able to establish an independent identity without being placed in the context of non-relevant online resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review information services in the context of the separated organisation and known user needs</li> <li>• Develop a costed strategy for developing and targeting information services and products under the museum's independent identity.</li> </ul>

It will also be worthwhile reviewing your opportunities during corporate planning and funding reviews in case your museum's priorities shift and opportunities can be re-prioritised accordingly.

### What you can do

To evaluate and develop the opportunities which may be presented by change within your museum, first review the earlier *Quick Guides* in this series in order to ensure that you have a good understanding of the nature of the change being faced by your museum, and the issues this may present.

Follow the steps set out above to **identify, evaluate, prioritise, develop** and **monitor** opportunities which exist.

Opportunities which develop into projects will need to form part of your museum's corporate planning; budgets and other resources may be required and you may therefore need to prepare a business case accordingly.

### Further reading

The other five *Quick Guides* in this series provide more detailed advice on the steps to follow to help ensure that your information management is in the best possible shape to support your museum in times of change. The other titles in the series are:

- Quick Guide 1: Understanding Change*
- Quick Guide 2: Surviving Separation*
- Quick Guide 3: Museum Mergers*
- Quick Guide 4: Assessing Risk*
- Quick Guide 6: Real-life Implementation*

For a more detailed discussion of innovation in the context of information and knowledge management read:

Leonard, Dorothy A., *Managing Knowledge Assets, Creativity and Innovation*, World Scientific Publishing, 2011. ISBN 9814295493