

FACTSHEET 1: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT PLAN

THIS FACTSHEET RELATES TO QUESTION 2.3 OF THE MSPI
(MUSEUM STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND)

1. Introduction

Writing a Strategic Management Plan can provide a museum with an opportunity to take stock of its position and reflect on its fundamental aspirations and purpose. Approached positively, it can be a rewarding and energising experience for all staff.

A Strategic Management Plan (SMP) is one of the minimum standards required as part of an application for the Heritage Council's Accreditation Scheme. It is a medium to long-term plan, usually covering a three to five year period. A SMP will focus on the museum as whole and not on individual sections within the museum. It will also consider external factors that may influence proposals. It is broadly composed of Strategic Aims and Objectives, with associated timeframes and resource implications. It is an overarching document that sets down aspirations, priorities, and cost implications.

In general, Strategic Management Plans record past achievements and provide a clear statement of purpose. They are primarily planning documents, but can also be used as advocacy documents in which a museum makes a case for the expansion of existing programmes.

2. Process

Strategic Management Plans are best developed through an internal process of discussion and review involving management, staff, and governors. Museums must also consult externally with stakeholders such as funding bodies, key individuals and organisations and, if at all possible, with the broader community.

Internally, conduct a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis. This can help define the current position and open up opportunities for discussion. The time required for this process will vary depending on the size of the museum. In a small museum it can be completed within two to three months. Larger museums with different departments will require longer.

3. Components of a Strategic Management Plan

A Strategic Management Plan normally consists of an introduction followed by a series of tables. Although presentation and terminology will differ, generally a SMP includes the following:

- i. Mission Statement
- ii. Overview
- iii. Situation Review
- iv. Financial Projections
- v. Strategic Aims or Goals
- vi. Objectives
- vii. Performance Indicators
- viii. Review Mechanism

i) Mission Statement

All Strategic Management Plans take the **Mission Statement** of the museum as their starting point. This

contains a clear statement of purpose for the museum and must be developed internally through discussion, led by the head of the museum. It must also relate to any overarching Mission Statement of a parent body.

A Mission Statement must state the purpose, values, goals, functions, and stakeholders of the museum. Specific Strategic Aims and Objectives flow from this initial statement.

In support of the Mission Statement, it is recommended that museums develop a **Statement of Values**: matters that are important to it and which drive its work. These will include values like: preserving a cultural inheritance; passing knowledge on to new generations; encouraging cultural diversity; inculcating civic pride; and contributing to the community or economic development. The values of each museum will reflect its particular origins and will vary accordingly.

ii) Overview

The **Overview** is best presented in narrative form. It states the context in which the SMP will be implemented over the planning period. A two or three page narrative (depending on the size of the museum) must include the following information:

- A general description of the museum
- A note on the services that are provided to users
- A short pen-picture of the museum buildings
- The size and range of collections held
- The numbers and functions of staff
- The form of governance within which the museum functions
- The normal sources of operational funding
- Summary of income and expenditure figures
- A note of any current capital works
- A description of stakeholders
- The annual visitor numbers

It is also recommended that an annual **Income and Expenditure Summary Statement**, with further detail on levels of spending and income, is included as an Appendix.

iii) Situation Review

The **Situation Review** takes a critical look at the museum's current position as part of the development of the Strategic Management Plan. All museums, whether or not currently operating within a SMP, must review their achievements to date and identify obstacles to achievement. They must also review progress against Strategic Aims, however informally stated.

The Situation Review can also be used to examine the changing external environment and the influence it has had up to this point, sometimes referred to as an 'Environmental Scan'. A SMP that also functions as an advocacy document should use the Situation Review to define key issues that will affect the future of the museum. These can then be addressed through the Strategic Aims and Objectives.

The museum's Situation Review should take account of estimated income and expenditure during the lifetime of the Strategic Plan and should include financial projections as an Appendix. See also Standard 2.6 and Factsheet 2: Financial

iv) Strategic Aims

Strategic Aims should be defined as clearly as possible. It is best to concentrate on a small number of realistic and achievable aims. These may relate to key programmes and activities, including core functions such as

collections care. For a small museum six aims may be appropriate, but the number will vary between museums.

A Strategic Management Plan is not a short-term document. It is designed to focus on key issues and policies that will concern the museum over a medium to long-term period. Strategic Aims (or goals) are not usually achievable within a one-year planning period but should generally be achievable within the overall timeframe of the SMP.

Strategic Aims can be stated in narrative and list form. It is recommended that each Strategic Aim is stated at the head of a table that tabulates all the associated Objectives. Table 1 shows how each Aim can be presented with all the associated Objectives. The timescale for each Objective is indicated in columns.

Include a general statement about resources within the introductory narrative to the Strategic Aims and Objectives. These statements will reflect the individual position of the museum. For example:

'This Strategic Management Plan is for five-year period. It is based on certain assumptions and cannot be achieved without additional funding. The achievement of the performance targets also depends on such resources. The SMP also assumes continued annual funding from Whichever Council.'

'Many of the activities listed below can and will happen using the personnel and finance currently available to the museum. However, the SMP also covers problems and opportunities that cannot be addressed or realised without the investment of extra resources.'

iv) Objectives

Objectives are short-term proposals that flow from each Strategic Aim. Objectives should usually be achievable within one year of business although some may take a number of years to achieve, depending on individual circumstances. All Objectives must be as specific as possible. In compiling a list, concentrate on what the museum needs to achieve and can realistically achieve on a year-by-year basis.

The linked relationship between Strategic Aims and Objectives is best summarised with a hypothetical example:

Strategic Aim 1: To increase visitor numbers to the Museum by 5%. In support of this aim the museum sets a number of objectives.

Objective 1: To publish new promotional literature (this could be a one-year objective)

Objective 2: To target the schools' market with special learning resources (this could be repeated for a number of years in order to break up the delivery of the objective into manageable time periods).

Each Objective should give the timeframe for delivery. If an Objective requires additional resources to achieve it, these must also be shown (see Table 2).

If an Objective can be achieved within your current budget, there is no need to show a figure in the resource column. Where additional funds are needed, for example to fund a new education outreach programme, you must research this cost and show that figure against that particular Objective.

v) Performance Indicators

A Strategic Management Plan should measure the museum's corporate performance. It does not measure individual performance. **Performance indicators** should be few and realistic. For example, an SMP that

uses six Strategic Aims should establish at least one indicator for each aim. Some museums use up to ten indicators, some annual, and some to recur throughout the SMP period.

Performance indicators or measures may be qualitative or quantitative:

- Qualitative indicators could include the improvement of displays or an enhanced conservation provision
- Quantitative indicators could include visitor and user numbers, percentage reductions in documentation backlogs, or the realisation on time of a major objective

vi) Review Mechanism

In order to monitor progress and identify problems during the Plan period, it is recommended that the Strategic Management Plan, as a whole, be reviewed on an annual or semi-annual basis. The following statement may act as a guide:

'This is a xx-year Strategic Management Plan which will be reviewed annually. During the year, key objectives that require interim review will be the subject of a six-month review. All reviews will take the form of meetings between the curator and the museum management. Progress and problems will be discussed against each objective, using the SMP as a guide.'

'Within the time span of the SMP, the museum will be working to Annual Action Plans that will break down the objectives for the year into a series of tasks and date targets and other significant factors. This Annual Action Plan contains its own internal review mechanisms.'

4. Appendices

It is recommended that certain useful information be attached as appendices to a Strategic Management Plan. These should be few in number. The following should be considered:

- Annual Income and Expenditure Summary Statement
- Collection and Loan Policies
- Description of consultation process for the SMP (if any)
- A brief contextual note about Museum Accreditation
- List of governors, boards, committees and staff and
- Contact information
- Significant documents, such as a Development Plan

5. Writing Annual Action Plans

In addition to a Strategic Management Plan applicants for Museum Accreditation will be required to submit an **Annual Action Plan** with three to five-year SMPs.

An Annual Action Plan is a separate document which takes the objectives for one year of the SMP and defines associated tasks and budgets for each Objective. Museums will be required to write an Annual Action Plan for each year of the SMP, covering the objectives to be addressed during that year, but for accreditation application purposes a plan for the first year will suffice.

The annual production of an Annual Action Plan can be set down within the SMP as an Objective, recurring each year. This would normally be included in a Strategic Aim concerning management.

An Annual Action Plan is usually written as a table. Information should be presented under a series of column headings, using short phrases, not sentences. Within the tabulated framework, personnel and

financial resources should be assigned against the different objectives. Generally speaking, the column headings shown below should be used.

Tasks/ actions	Person responsible	Targets	Other key players	Critical success factors	Resources	Review of Objective
Tasks or actions required to achieve the objective	The curator, conservator, etc, responsible for leading or meeting the objective	Usually date target. This column also allows you to identify the tasks to be completed in any one year	Individuals in other departments or in other organisations whose involvement is needed	Matters which will make or break the delivery of the objective, like the launch of a government policy	Funds needed to complete the task or meet objective (extra to usual budget)	The frequency and method of review

SAMPLE TABLES: Table 1

Strategic Aim 1: To develop, manage and care for the collections of Whichever Museum

Objectives	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Resource
1. Continue to develop the collections through appropriate acquisition	■	■	■	■	■	
2. Assess the extent of the backlog in documentation	■					
3. Prepare a plan to address the backlog in collections documentation	■					
4. Review the performance of the computer documentation system	■					
5. Implement the Documentation Backlog Plan	■	■	■	■	■	
6. Develop a manual for documentation procedure	■					
7. Write a Collections Loan Policy	■					
8. Write a Disposal Policy	■					
9. Assess the feasibility of digitising the photographic and archive collections		■				
10. Prepare a Collections Care Strategy	■					
11. Develop a comprehensive museum Disaster Plan		■				

SAMPLE TABLES: Table 2

Strategic Aim 1: To develop, manage and care for the collections of Whichever Museum

Objective 1: To continue to develop the collections through appropriate acquisition based on the Collection Policy

Task	Responsibility (internal)	Target	Other key players	Critical Success Factors	Resource	Review
1.						
2.						
3.						

Objective 2: To assess the extent of the backlog in documentation and prepare a plan to address backlog

Task	Responsibility (internal)	Target	Other key players	Critical Success Factors	Resource	Review
1.						
2.						
3.						