

FACTSHEET 5: WRITING A CARE OF COLLECTIONS STRATEGY

THIS FACTSHEET RELATES TO QUESTION 3.21 OF THE MSPI
(MUSEUM STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND)

Introduction

Strategic Plans are best developed through an internal process of discussion and review; so you need to identify all the relevant staff and get them involved from the start. Your **Care of Collections Strategy** needs to be directly linked to your **Institution's Strategic Management Plan (SMP)** which is required to achieve Interim Accreditation. If you were not involved in drawing it up, then discuss how it was developed with your colleagues who did.

If your institution's SMP is currently being written or revised it is worth starting discussions as soon as possible with key staff on what is likely to go into it; as a number of the Strategic Aims and objectives for the SMP will need to be mirrored in the Caring for Collections Strategy.

Please refer to requirements and guidelines for Standard 2.6 Strategic Management Plan and current Annual Action Plan.

Situation Review

Before you start writing the strategy you need to sit down and evaluate the condition of your facilities and the collection as a whole.

This includes:

- Structural condition of the building - interior and exterior
- Assessment of the condition of the collection
- Environmental conditions
- How collections are handled and accessed
- Storage facilities
- Exhibition facilities
- Disaster planning
- Training

If you take the time to evaluate current practice across this range of topics it can be quite straightforward to then put together a strategic plan for actions identified as requiring attention.

Please refer to **Care of Collections Situation Review** Factsheet 6. This useful checklist directly refers to Susan Corr's publication *Caring for Collections: A Manual of Preventive Conservation*. If you wish to carry out more in-depth reviews this factsheet also lists other useful tools at the end

Template for writing your Caring for Collections Strategy

This is a simple template or checklist of what to include when writing your Strategy and does not need to be followed to the letter. Remember it is more important that the Strategy's structure and terminology are consistent with those used for your institution's Strategic Management Plan (SMP).

1. Mission Statement for your Institution

This is a Minimum Standard for Interim Accreditation

2. Situation Review

Deriving from your Situation Review (see above) which may be referenced as an appendix, this should be an introductory paragraph or two outlining the current state of Collection Care at your place of work and aspirations for the future.

Also include a general statement about resources - for example:

This Caring for Collections Strategy is for a five year period 2015-2020. Many of the objectives can and will be met using existing staff and funding available; however the strategy also covers objectives that cannot be addressed without the investment of additional resources.

3. Strategic Aims

Concentrate on a small number of realistic and achievable aims or goals. These should **not** be short-term or 'quick fix' aims (such as fix the roof or purchase new storage shelves) but key issues that will concern the Collection over the medium to long-term period. They will generally **not** be achievable in twelve months.

For example:

- To provide environmental stability for all Collections during storage, handling and display
- To ensure the long-term preservation of the Collections
- To stabilise and improve the storage conditions of the collection
- To conserve the key priorities of the collection
- To raise awareness of preservation issues to museum visitors and researchers

However you word it, your strategic aims should ensure the long term care of the collections and should be directly linked to aims in your Strategic Management Plan (Standard 2.3)

4. Objectives

Then list the objectives for achieving each goal - some of these will be quite simple to achieve with existing staff and resources within a twelve month period or less; while others may take years to implement.

6. Action plan

Your key objectives should then be broken down on an annual basis into smaller tasks that will be carried out over a year and reflected in the organisation's Annual Action Plan (Standard 2.3). A member of staff should be made responsible for each task or action and a target date for completion agreed. Any additional resources needed to complete the task on time must be identified. It is essential that you are realistic when setting completion dates and that all staff responsible are involved when setting them.

Template table for a Care of Collections Strategy

Strategic Aim 1: To stabilise and improve the storage conditions of the collection

Objectives	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Resources
1. To ensure that all storage materials are archival/conservation grade	■	■		
2. To monitor environmental conditions	■	■		
3. To improve access to Collections		■	■	

Template for table for Annual Action Plan

Strategic Aim 1: To stabilise and improve the storage conditions of the collection

Objective 1: To ensure that all storage materials are archival/conservation grade

Task	Responsibility (Staff member)	Target Date for completion	Resources needed	Review Date for task
1. Carry out condition assessment of collections - this will include condition of existing storage materials				
2. Remove all acidic, dirty or damaged packaging				
3. Identification of new storage materials required and estimated costs				
4. Introduce a programme of rehousing				

5. Review procedures

This should list when the Strategy was formally adopted and by who, as well as how often your institution will review the document and corresponding Annual Action Plan.

For example: *This five-year plan will be reviewed annually. 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 Director and Curator. Progress and any problems will be discussed against each objective using the strategy as a guide.*