

FACTSHEET 9: DEVELOPING AN EDUCATION POLICY

**THIS FACTSHEET RELATES TO QUESTION 6.6 OF THE MSPI
(MUSEUM STANDARDS PROGRAMME FOR IRELAND)**

The process of developing and drafting an education policy may take up to six months depending on the nature and scale of the institution and the level of research and consultation carried out. The education policy must be formally approved by the governing body.

The following 10-step approach is a guideline for museums to follow.

1. Background Research

Research and document the following:

- What resources are available in the museum for education: collections space, money, time, and facilities - can these be supplemented?
- Identify the skills and expertise of the museum's staff, friends, and volunteers - is any further training required?
- Profile the museum's visitors and potential visitors - outline their expectations and needs, including learning needs
- Identify the museum's external competition

2. Conduct a SWOT Analysis

Carry out a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Strengths) Analysis with museum staff:

- Examine existing provision, collections, budgets, expertise of staff and volunteers
- List the museum's strengths and weaknesses
- Review external factors: changes in education, technology, social trends, funding opportunities
- List potential opportunities and threats

3. Education Mission Statement

Draft an Education Mission Statement for the museum. It must concisely set out the museum's vision for education in one or two sentences, and should derive from the overall Mission Statement of the museum. Involve as many staff/volunteers as possible in developing the Education Mission Statement.

4. Context

Write a brief summary of the history of education provision in the museum. Summarise the role of education within the museum and its overall approach. This should include areas such as: target audiences, learning needs, market research, types and quality of provision, exhibition development, evaluation, marketing, training, networking, and resources.

5. Aims of the Education Policy - where does the museum want to be?

Aims should be appropriate, realistic, and achievable. These are the museum's broad, long-term goals over three to five years. The aims must be based on research carried out and must state who the museum is going to be working with, the approach it is going to take, and what it hopes to achieve. There should be no more than six stated aims. For example:

- i. 'To widen the range of activities available to adults.'
- ii. 'To involve local community groups in developing a community-based programme which will improve the services and resources available at the museum and broaden access to the collection(s).'
- iii. 'To develop a team-based approach to exhibition planning and design which will ensure that future exhibitions will be better able to meet the learning needs of target audiences.'

6. Objectives of the Education Policy - how is the museum going to get there?

Objectives should be **SMART**:

Specific,
 Measurable,
 Agreed,
 Realistic/Relevant, and
 Time-bound

Each aim must have a number of objectives demonstrating how the museum is going to achieve that particular aim. For example, if the aim is: 'to widen the range of activities available to adults', the corresponding objectives might be:

- i. To develop reminiscence work by working with community groups.
- ii. To run blocks of classes for adults that would engage them in working co-operatively to understand and enjoy the museum's collections.
- iii. To offer four classes as part of the artist-in-residence programme at a level appropriate to adults.

7. Annual Action Plan - how will the museum meet the objectives of the Education Policy?

The Annual Action Plan is a one-year plan. It must identify the individual tasks to be completed under each objective, specify who will do them, when, and what the cost will be. This can be set out in narrative or tabular format (see below).

Activity	Audience	Tasks	Staff Responsible	Other Key Players	Target Date	Resource/ Budget	Evaluation/ Review
----------	----------	-------	-------------------	-------------------	-------------	------------------	--------------------

8. Consultation

Review the draft policy with relevant individuals/groups and make amendments as appropriate.

9. Performance Indicators - have the objectives been reached?

These measures should be both quantitative (numbers of visitors, events, work packs) and qualitative (user satisfaction surveys, comments books, focus groups).

10. Monitoring and Review of Policy

It is recommended that the Action Plan be reviewed annually.