

BRITISH MUSEUM'S MUSEUM FUTURES PROGRAMME: ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEARNING

The Museum Futures programme has made significant achievements in terms of all its key objectives: recruitment practice, skills development and dissemination of learning. Despite the exigencies of the pandemic, a range of high quality on the job learning was delivered primarily by supervisors in museums across the four nations, and a significant number of qualified trainees are now employed in the sector. Learning has been identified which could further strengthen future programmes and which could contribute to sector development.

INCREASING THE DIVERSITY OF THE HERITAGE WORKFORCE

Overall, the Museum Futures programme achieved almost all of its targets for increasing the diversity of the heritage workforce however, across all years of the programme, supervisors have reported mixed success in recruiting trainees from target groups specific to their museums.

Beyond the programme's specific diversity targets, its inclusive and accessible recruitment approach has also demonstrated the potential for these practices to increase workforce diversity across a wider range of measures. Early indications are also that the Museum Futures programme is playing a part in increasing workforce diversity in the sector over the longer term, with at least 50% of trainees remaining in the sector after their placement.

Museum Futures recruitment experiences have strengthened the relationship between some partner museums and their local communities, and has had wider impacts for many in changing some of their usual recruitment practices to encourage greater workforce diversity.

LEARNING TO INFORM FUTURE PROGRAMMES

1. Ensure the definition of target recruitment groups is clear in relation to educational level.
2. Set recruitment targets that are meaningful for small-scale programmes; when dealing with fewer than 10 trainees each year, a target of 90% requires all trainees to meet the criteria!
3. Clarify whether recruitment will be positive action (ie addressing a protected characteristic) or inclusive/accessible (ie targeting a group which is under-represented in the museum workforce but doesn't have protected characteristics).
4. Design application forms to include eligibility checks and prevent applications from people outside the target groups, to create a more level playing field for all applicants and result in all traineeships being awarded to people from target groups.
5. Ensure non-core recruitment tools eg volunteering opportunities are designed to take into account organisational capacity.
6. Consider building in 2+ year traineeship commitments to deepen organisational learning.
7. Build in more time for the recruitment process to support deeper engagement with community partners and prospective applicants.
8. Collect consistent demographic data (age, educational attainment and experience) to show how effective different recruitment methods are for attracting target groups.
9. Help museums to manage expectations about application quality and provide extra support to applicants for the application process to reduce the mismatch between organisational and individual expectations of the application process.

PROVIDING TRAINING AND ENABLING SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

Feedback on training events and on on-the-job training for trainees indicates that these have generally been delivered to a high quality standard. Broadly speaking, trainees have found mentoring, peer networks and the support of the Programme Manager to be positive parts of the programme which have contributed to the development of their knowledge, skills and experience in a range of ways.

Training for supervisors, assessors and mentors were secondary to the programme's main purpose but feedback from the Diversity and Inclusion training offered by Creative Access indicates that attendees (mainly Y2 and Y3 supervisors) found this to be highly useful in helping them to create accessible placements that were suited to their trainees' needs.

Although almost all trainees have gained their Cultural Heritage Diploma, their experiences of working towards the qualification have been mixed. There has been significant development of trainees' digital, museum and employment skills through the design of the traineeship, quality of training, quality of networks and relationships trainees developed. The flexibility and commitment of supervisory staff and Programme Manager have contributed very positively to successful outcomes.

Levels of digital awareness have grown within partner museums' staff, though as no development activity was planned for them, there has been little growth in their digital skills. The majority of supervisors' management skills have also developed as have those of their colleagues.

LEARNING TO INFORM FUTURE PROGRAMMES

1. Identify the essential skills for development upfront to inform the choice of museum partner, influence the individual traineeship content and provide trainees with a more holistic skillset.
2. Encourage museums to be clear about the case for diversity so that they can take a more rigorous approach to traineeship role design, enabling trainees to make an even greater contribution to their museums.
3. Ensure all museums have a clear role profile and task list for trainees, to provide engaging and meaningful work throughout their placement.
4. Inform supervisors upfront about qualification requirements so that these can be better integrated into placement design.
5. Introduce a joint digital project for trainees to develop their ownership and responsibility.
6. Supervisors should be chosen for their previous track record in relationship building and people management.
7. Require partner museums to release sufficient capacity for supervisors to manage trainees could help to ensure that trainees have a consistently higher quality experience of supervision.
8. Work with the awarding body to make the Cultural Heritage Diploma more accessible, more reflective of modern digital museum practice and the qualification criteria more easily matched to trainees' placement activities.

BUILDING SECTOR CAPACITY AND DISSEMINATING LEARNING

Partner museums were representative of broad museum types and the programme's flexibility allowed all to participate equally. Overall there has been considerable change in their capacity to deliver training, though it has come in unexpected ways, sometimes unintentionally and often imperceptibly.

The range of training resources available has increased and these are being reused. Developing on the job learning for trainees has had a positive influence on the development of other internal learning

opportunities. The pool of qualified assessors to support the Cultural Heritage qualification has also increased significantly.

There is evidence of internal, informal sharing of digital learning and externally of talking about digital projects and new routes into museums. The British Museum's Programme Manager has coordinated activity and has been a focal point both for dissemination and enquiries. Other dissemination has been more ad hoc. All sharing of learning has been adversely affected by the pandemic. There may be a gap in the conference market regarding the wider application of digital awareness and literacy.

LEARNING TO INFORM FUTURE PROGRAMMES

1. A better understanding of the time commitment, allocation of time and selection of appropriately skilled supervisors should ensure a net increase in capacity in future which will in turn ensure a strong pool of potential museum partners.
2. The development of a digital pathway with stipulated learning outcomes for digital skills development could address training capacity and act as a blueprint for wider staff training.
3. A more focussed approach to dissemination and clearer expectations of partner museums would enable greater learning to take place from future programmes.

WHAT HAS BEEN LEARNT TO INFORM SECTOR DEVELOPMENT?

1. **Define digital competencies for the sector** Without a clear baseline or an agreed understanding of what digital skills are, it is challenging to assess the extent to which they have been developed. The creation of a clear set of competencies for use in the sector would strengthen sectoral understanding. This finding is reinforced by those of the recent Digital Attitudes and Skills in Heritage (DASH) survey.
2. **Organisational upskilling** Future projects to increase digital skills (i.e. behaviour change) across the workforce could benefit from an initial whole organisation focus on digital awareness (i.e. contemplation and determination).
3. **Resources to support supervisors** There may be a need for more resources, including software, to support neurodivergent people in the workplace and to raise supervisors' awareness of the challenges and possibilities associated with neurodiversity. Similarly, there may be a need for more resources to support future supervisors in accessing professional guidance on mental health. Post pandemic these may be easier to source than previously.
4. **Organisational approach to capacity building** There is a perception that capacity building is about increasing the (human) resource rather than purposefully increasing the capacity, through training and development, of the existing (human) resource. The increase in staff's training capacity was something of a by-product of the traineeship rather than a focus. The change in such capacity may be hard to spot and is not necessarily recognised by partner museums. Therefore there is a risk that it is not capitalised upon. For capacity increases to be consolidated, a whole organisation approach – and a shared understanding - might be needed.
5. **Need for dedicated space to share learning** A dedicated online space with content moderation for sharing about traineeships in general, and about digital upskilling in particular, could add value for the sector.