

Finance support for AIM members

About AIM

The Association of Independent Museums is a thriving UK museum membership organisation with 1096 members of which 945 are museums (April 2025). AIM supports its members with generous support from Arts Council England and other funders.

We represent a wide range of the UK's museum and heritage organisations, from some of the largest attractions in the country to small, grassroots heritage organisations across a huge range of subject areas and localities.

Two thirds of our members are 'small museums' (under 20,000 visitors annually) many of which are run entirely by volunteers. We also include some of the largest civic trusts in the UK, with professional finance teams in place.

What all AIM members have in common is a desire for practical support – information, guidance, and tips that help them to run their museums as effective and forward-looking (charitable) businesses.

AIM helps heritage organisations prosper. We believe that museums must grow to fulfil their purpose and demonstrate the relevance of heritage to everyone.

AIM members' finance support needs

Museums and heritage organisations are operating in increasingly difficult economic and financial circumstances. Costs are increasing, audiences are cash-strapped, and the public and philanthropic funding landscape is complicated and competitive.

They have a mix of business models with differing levels of enterprise and commercial income options, differing tax and VAT positions, differing access to financial expertise, and differing levels of risk appetite.

According to a 2024 survey our membership's financial support priorities are:

- Gift Aid
- Museums and Galleries Exhibitions Tax Relief
- Recruitment of financial experts and/or finance trustees
- Risk
- Reserves
- VAT
- Banking
- Fraud

This list is not intended to be exhaustive. We need regular input from any support provider on common financial challenges for charities and cultural organisations, news and policy updates, and other things our members ought to know. Ways in which they currently access support include email updates, accessing online resources, attending online sessions, and training courses.

More broadly AIM members are interested in advocacy including getting ahead of, and understanding, the implications of fiscal events; practical and relevant toolkits and resources they can readily apply in their own organisation; access to tailored advice when required; and up-to-date information.

Tendering for finance support

Finance is one of our AIM Hallmarks ([AIM Hallmarks - AIM - Association of Independent Museums](#)), our framework helping independent museums thrive. The Finance Hallmark sets out that a good independent museum seeks to 'be financially resilient and well-managed as a charitable business' and provides some questions to help self-assessment in this area. We support this by providing access to financial support.

Since 2018 this has been through a partnership with the Charity Finance Group, providing AIM members with CFG membership and enabling them to access CFG member resources, helplines, and events. We understand around a third of members have utilised this offer, around 75 in depth and others less frequently or in a more limited way.

We are currently seeking to re-tender this support as a matter of best practice for our use of public funding, and to ensure we have explored ways to meet our membership's need for finance support.

What we're looking for

We are seeking consultants, consortia, or organisations that can provide finance support. We envision that this might be on the following basis, or include:

- Provision of and/or signposting to authoritative resources relevant to AIM members
- Briefings or other short written articles or updates when there are significant changes in the financial environment for museums and heritage organisations e.g. SORP changes, VAT changes, Budget announcements
- Minimum four Hallmarks at Home sessions annually on finance topics e.g. tax, risk, fraud prevention, recruitment of finance experts (Hallmarks at Home are 60-90 minute sessions for groups of 10-20 enabling general learning, discussion, and questions on individual issues or circumstances)
- Ad hoc/on-demand personalised advice/signposting for AIM members presenting with specific problems – we expect 50-75 contacts annually

We welcome alternative proposals of how to provide AIM members with an appropriate mix of: resources; group advice; tailored advice. We expect 250-350 members to access across all three types of support annually, principally, but not wholly, small museums.

The provider would need to review organisations accessing support regularly with the AIM membership team.

We require a twice-yearly report covering e.g. key trends including who is accessing support, issues being raised, which support elements are most popular, identifying 'superusers' so we can consider whether any tailored support is appropriate and so on.

Contract management

Budget: Up to £15,000 annually (including VAT)

Duration: 1st October 2025 until 31st March 2028 (initially)

Note: We expect to agree a 6-12 month provisional period after which either party could discontinue the arrangement and after which we will be able to confirm the end date, which is subject to the proposed extension of the current Arts Council National Portfolio; or to agree an extension, which is subject to AIM rejoining the 2027- or 2028- onwards National Portfolio.

We would seek to sign a partnership agreement (organisations) or our standard self-employed contractor agreement (individuals).

Responding to this brief

We would like to see responses which set out:

- Understanding of AIM's membership and their likely finance support needs now and in the coming years
- Proposals for activities and services to address this need
- Qualifications, credentials or experience of the team or organisation

Maximum 1,200 words, by email to lisa.ollerhead@aim-museums.co.uk, by **12 noon on Monday 9th June**