**Prospering Boards**

**Application Guidance**



*Prospering Boards* offers bespoke, individual support for museum boards at all stages of development.

*Prospering Boards* aims to strengthen museum boards and increase their capacity to offer effective leadership to their museums. Following the AIM Hallmarks, Prospering Boards aims to develop museum boards where:

*All trustees are proactive advocates for the organisation and its purpose. They focus on strategic and significant issues. They avoid conflicts of interest and always wear only one hat at a time. The trustees and senior staff or volunteers understand their different roles and work well together towards the purpose.*

Participating boards will receive one-to-one support from a specialist consultant, who will work with the board to identify and address areas for development.

*The programme is open to AIM member museums in England. Applicant museums will usually either be Accredited or working towards Accreditation. We are also able to offer support to non-Accredited museums where they can demonstrate that the support will enable them to move forward to apply for Accreditation.*

**How does it work?**

Museums considering an application are strongly encouraged to contact Helen Wilkinson for a preliminary discussion: helenw@aim-museums.co.uk.

The application process is in two stages. Firstly, boards use the Stage One application to describe how they want to develop and how they think Prospering Boards can help.

After a Stage One pass, successful applicants will be assigned a consultant from our pool of specialists, who will spend up to a day working with a group of trustees, and staff if appropriate, on an initial **diagnostic visit and follow up**. This diagnostic visit is designed to:

* explore the issues identified on the application form in more detail
* test whether there are further underlying issues the board should also address
* assess whether the board as a whole is sufficiently committed to change and development
* if appropriate, develop a plan for further support.

Following the visit, the consultant and a representative from the museum will put together a short Stage Two application requesting specific further support.

Consultants will also be offered the opportunity to submit a confidential supplementary report to AIM to share any concerns and tell us if they think support needs to be conditional on any prior work.

Subject to a successful Stage 2 application, we will offer between 2 and 7 days of consultant time to boards following the initial diagnostic day. We anticipate that most applications will be for between 3 and 5 days of further support. Successful applicants will be required to confirm that they accept our Terms and Conditions and in some cases may be required to meet additional conditions before the support begins.

Programme participants are required to complete an end of project report, with their consultant. At that stage, museums can apply for some additional **Follow Up support** to ensure that change is embedded in the longer term. This can be up to one additional day, and might be used for phone support, or a follow up meeting some months after the end of the main programme.

We are also offering the opportunity for museums to apply for **micro-consultancy support**, of up to two days in length, where boards have a clear idea of their strengths and future direction but need support on a specific issue. Please contact Helen Wilkinson if you think a microconsultancy might be appropriate for your board.

**Our consultants:**

We will be announcing the consultants working with us on the Prospering Boards programme in July 2018.

Boards can specify if they have a preference for a particular one of these consultants when applying, but we cannot guarantee the match.

Applications open in June 2018 and will be assessed on a rolling basis for as long as funding remains available, with further funding available in each of the next three financial years (from April 2019 onwards).

Applications will be assessed by AIM staff and referred to AIM Council if appropriate. We will also discuss your application with colleagues in Museum Development, if appropriate.

***Specific notes for Stage One applications***

**Question 2, Understanding the Opportunity**

*Please briefly outline what your board’s needs or areas for development are, and how you have identified them.*

Prospering Boards is designed to be responsive to individual boards’ needs and can support museums with high-performing boards which want to hone a particular area of their performance as well as those facing a particular challenge or opportunity. Explain what you see as the opportunity for developing your board.

We recommend working through some of the questions suggested in *Preparing to Prosper* as a board prior to completing your application. If you have used this, or another diagnostic tool, tell us about the results of your conversations. (See link: https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Web-compressed-spreads\_DC17.284.B-AIM-–-A4-24pp-Booklet.pdf

**Question 3, Proposed Programme of work**

If successful in your Stage One application, the chosen consultant will work with you to refine your plan, so it is not essential to pin down every detail at this stage. What is essential, however, is that you can demonstrate that you have thought about what it might be like to work with a consultant – why it will make a difference to you, and what you will be able to achieve that you couldn’t otherwise manage.

Give some indication of what activities you might undertake with the consultant, and how many days you think each will take. Suggested activities include:

* *Attending or facilitating full board meetings*
* *Planning and facilitating a board away day or away days*
* *Follow up to facilitated Board awayday(s) to review progress made*
* *Supporting Board review and Trustee appraisal*
* *Establishing practice or the systems for review and appraisal of CEO/Director*
* *Meetings with a governance subgroup, either an existing subgroup or one convened especially for this piece of work*
* *Meeting other groups such as an operations or management committee to help refine roles and responsibilities*
* *Consultation with stakeholders and staff (either in person or by telephone)*
* *Telephone and/or email support for the Chair or other board members*

This list is not intended to be exhaustive, and we don’t expect you to carry out all of these.

In estimating how much time you might need, remember that the consultant will need some time to prepare for meetings with you, especially if running an Away Day or other event.

**Question 4, the diagnostic stage**

Use this section to describe briefly who will meet the consultant at the diagnostic stage and in what format.

The consultant needs to get a rounded picture of both the museum and the board. The easiest way to achieve this is usually for them to spend a few hours in the museum, with a number of one-to-ones or small group meetings with key trustees and possibly a member of staff. It is essential that the consultant has the opportunity to speak to a number of trustees privately, so that people feel able to share any concerns confidentially. From experience, we know that projects are only successful when they have the support of a number of committed trustees – having an enthusiastic chair is not enough if no one else is bought in. So you need to make sure that the consultant will be able to gauge this.

Diagnostic conversations can sometimes be carried out remotely by phone etc, although this makes it harder to get a sense of the organisation as a whole. If you think this is the best option, please explain why.