

## AIM Conference Futures - Research Brief

### About AIM

The Association of Independent Museums (AIM) was established in 1977 to create a network of mutual help and support for the UK's independent museums and provide them with a singular representative voice. According to *Mapping Museums*<sup>[1]</sup> independent museums make up at least 71.5% of the total UK sector.

Typically, independent museums derive their independence from being a successful business, not reliant on public money per se but on meeting the needs of the visitor.

Around two-thirds of AIM members are 'small' museums celebrating local heritage and providing cultural engagement opportunities on high streets and town centres all around the UK.

<sup>[1]</sup> <https://museweb.dcs.bbk.ac.uk/home>

### Background

AIM's annual national conference is valued by members as an important element of their membership (48% seeing it as an 'essential' or 'very important' element of AIM provision (2021 members survey)). The conference, when held in person, takes place at a member's venue and attracts 250-300 paying delegates across two days.

	<b>2019 attendance</b>	<b>2018 attendance</b>	<b>2017 attendance</b>
Day 1	280	272	305
Day 2	286	258	273

In 2020 and 2021 the conference moved online due to the pandemic. The 2020 event was free to all (via Zoom), and the 2021 attracted a small charge (via Hopin).

AIM is returning to running a physical event in 2022, without a digital or hybrid element. Around 50% of attendees are repeat visitors, having attended the previous year's event and most attendees are AIM members. 300 delegates represent just under a third of the AIM museum membership.

Conference provides AIM with a revenue stream and forms the key element of chargeable content AIM provides, alongside a leadership programme (Spark!) and a Trustee induction programme. The expectation is that chargeable content will grow.

### Research aims

AIM would like to explore the potential for growing income derived from conference activity, in particular considering:

1. Frequency – is an annual large-scale event preferable to more frequent, smaller-scale events? At what point would conference lose its appeal in terms of scale, size?
2. Pricing – AIM would like to understand potential pricing strategies for growing conference income. For example, what is the optimum price point to retain members' sense of vfm? What potential is there for organisational pricing, student pricing and so on.
3. Conversion - How can AIM better convert members to conference attendance, and is this the optimum growth strategy?

4. Format – Further clarify demand for online and hybrid, and at what related price point comparative to ‘in person’.
5. Venue - Outline location and venue preferences (urban, rural, member museum, conference venue).

### **Existing insights and research support**

AIM can provide the successful supplier with:

AIM Conference surveys 2018 2019 2020 2021

AIM Member surveys 2019 2021

Members and more can be reached via regular AIM communications (i.e., weekly eNews, www, Bulletin, social). Note that the eNews does go to non-members but reaching these for input will be a key challenge, opportunity for the research.

AIM also has its own ‘consumer panel’, the AIM Membership Insight Group which can also support the research.

### **Timescales**

Successful tender team will be notified by mid-July.

This research is to inform decisions around the 2024 AIM Conference. Research findings and recommendations will be submitted to the Board 6 December 2022 meeting.

### **Research Budget**

£6000-£8000

### **Reporting requirements.**

Written report, with summary recommendations for Board consideration.

### **Proposals and weighting**

Respondents are asked to outline:

- Proposed costed methodology, and timetable (70%)
- Relevant skills and experience, including details of team members where appropriate (30%)
- Proof of professional indemnity insurance
- Two references

### **Submissions**

Submissions can be in a range of formats, such as video, but must include the above areas.

Please submit proposals to Matt Smith [matt@aim-museums.co.uk](mailto:matt@aim-museums.co.uk) by 5pm 4 July 2022. Informal calls on the brief can be arranged with Matt via the above email.