



**The AIM  
Hallmarks**  
of Prospering Museums

# The AIM Hallmarks of Prospering Museums

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A framework bringing together the  
key characteristics helping heritage  
organisations prosper and thrive



Association of  
Independent  
Museums



# What are the AIM Hallmarks?

The UK boasts some of the best museum and heritage experiences in the world, sharing a rich range of stories, collections and historic sites with as many people as possible, in interesting and exciting ways. Many of these organisations are independent thinking, ready to try new things, resourceful and passionate.

They benefit from the insight of people from a wide range of backgrounds and with varied skills and experiences.

The AIM Hallmarks share the experiences of two generations of leaders of these independent and imaginative museums and heritage organisations.



## Purpose

You have a clear, compelling and people-oriented purpose that is shared by everyone in your organisation.

You actively use it to keep your organisation on course as it flexes and adapts to changes.

## Leadership & Culture

The leadership of your organisation is clear, directed, delegates freely and fosters a positive culture that is open to new ideas and ready to seize opportunities.

Your organisation is independent-thinking and entrepreneurial. It is focused collectively on outcomes. Key information on performance is shared within the organisation.

## Governance

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.

## Innovation

The organisation encourages innovation and creative thinking. It adapts, invests and takes planned risks, in order to find new and better ways to achieve its purpose.

No one accepts that the status quo is fixed and unchangeable.

## Finance

The organisation nurtures a diversity of income sources. Some of these are predictable and it has sound business planning skills.

All leaders understand the key drivers of their business model. The organisation actively identifies, develops and utilises its assets to generate income in order to fulfil its purpose.

## Collections

The organisation understands the potential of its collection. It recognises what constitutes its heritage assets - including stories, knowledge and places, as well as objects.

It seeks to fulfil its purpose through enabling the broadest possible audience to engage fully with all its heritage assets and caring for them in line with best practice.

## Visitor Focus

The organisation actively seeks to understand its current and potential visitors, customers and supporters, and responds to the needs it identifies, when delivering the organisation's purpose.

It continually measures its quality and its success in delivering a first-class visitor experience to the broadest possible audience, and seeks to adapt whenever necessary.

## Awareness & Networks

The organisation constantly looks ahead, including outside of itself to the broader heritage and tourism sectors. It is aware of trends and anticipates challenges.

It makes itself well-known, relevant to and visible within its immediate community and has a range of other, wider networks.

## Tackling Inequality

The organisation recognises its responsibility to carry out its purpose for the benefit of all, striving to make a positive impact and represent all communities. It understands and takes action to challenge prejudice and inequality and create equality of opportunity for its workforce and its users. It acknowledges that the connections between our nation's history and heritage are an invaluable tool in the fight against discrimination.

# Measuring up against the Hallmarks

Questions to help your organisation use the AIM Hallmarks for self-assessment

## Purpose

- How compelling is our purpose?
- How relevant is it to a wide range of people?
- How effectively is it shared by everyone in our organisation?
- How well do we use it to test decisions and steer our organisation?

## Leadership & Culture

- To what extent do the leaders in our organisation foster openness to new ideas and a 'can-do' attitude?
- How effective are we at seizing opportunities and being entrepreneurial?
- How clear is everyone in the organisation about our intended outcomes and our progress towards them?

## Governance

- How effectively do trustees advocate for the organisation?
- To what extent do trustees focus on strategic issues?
- To what extent is there clarity about the different roles of trustees and staff or volunteers?
- How well do trustees and staff/volunteers work together?

## Innovation

- How good are we at encouraging our team to try new things?
- To what extent do we actively look for new ways of achieving our purpose?
- How effectively do we avoid being held back by the objection 'we've always done it that way'?

## Finance

- How well-balanced is our mix of income?
- How well do all leaders understand our business model?
- How effectively do we make the most of our assets to generate income?

## Collections

- How strong is the link between our collections and our purpose?
- How well do we realise the full potential of our collection to benefit a broad range of people including those we have not engaged with in the past?
- How clear is our picture of what constitutes our heritage assets, including looking beyond objects and specimens?
- To what extent does our collections care meet best practice standards?

## Visitor Focus

- How well do we understand our current audiences' needs and motivations?
- How well do we understand our potential audiences' needs, interests and motivations?
- To what extent does our planning and investment flow from putting our current and potential audiences' needs first?
- How effective are we in delivering a first-class visitor experience?

## Awareness & Networks

- How effectively do we identify external developments that might affect us?
- How well do we know our community?
- How well known are we by our community?
- How good are we at making connections with wider networks?

## Tackling Inequality

- To what extent do we understand how our organisation can promote equity and inclusion?
- How effectively does our organisation listen to and act on a range of voices from diverse backgrounds?
- How well do we create opportunities equally for and understand the needs of a diverse workforce?
- To what extent do we develop and understand our collections, identify missing perspectives and histories and use them to encourage debate and discussion?
- To what extent do we challenge practices that support inequality in all its forms?
- How well do we recognise that diversity is fundamental for the success of our business?