



Association of
Independent
Museums

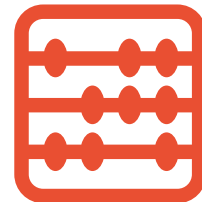
Museum Operating models research

Summary



Four core questions

- 1.** What indicators are there in the present that museums can exploit future opportunities?
- 2.** What are the characteristics of a future thriving museum likely to be?
- 3.** How can independent museums and trusts develop business models that are future ready?
- 4.** How might an enabling environment be developed for museums to flourish in future?



Approach

- › 30 financial reviews – 8 case studies (Random then purposive sample of ACE accredited museums)
- › Literature review
- › Interviews and roundtable discussions



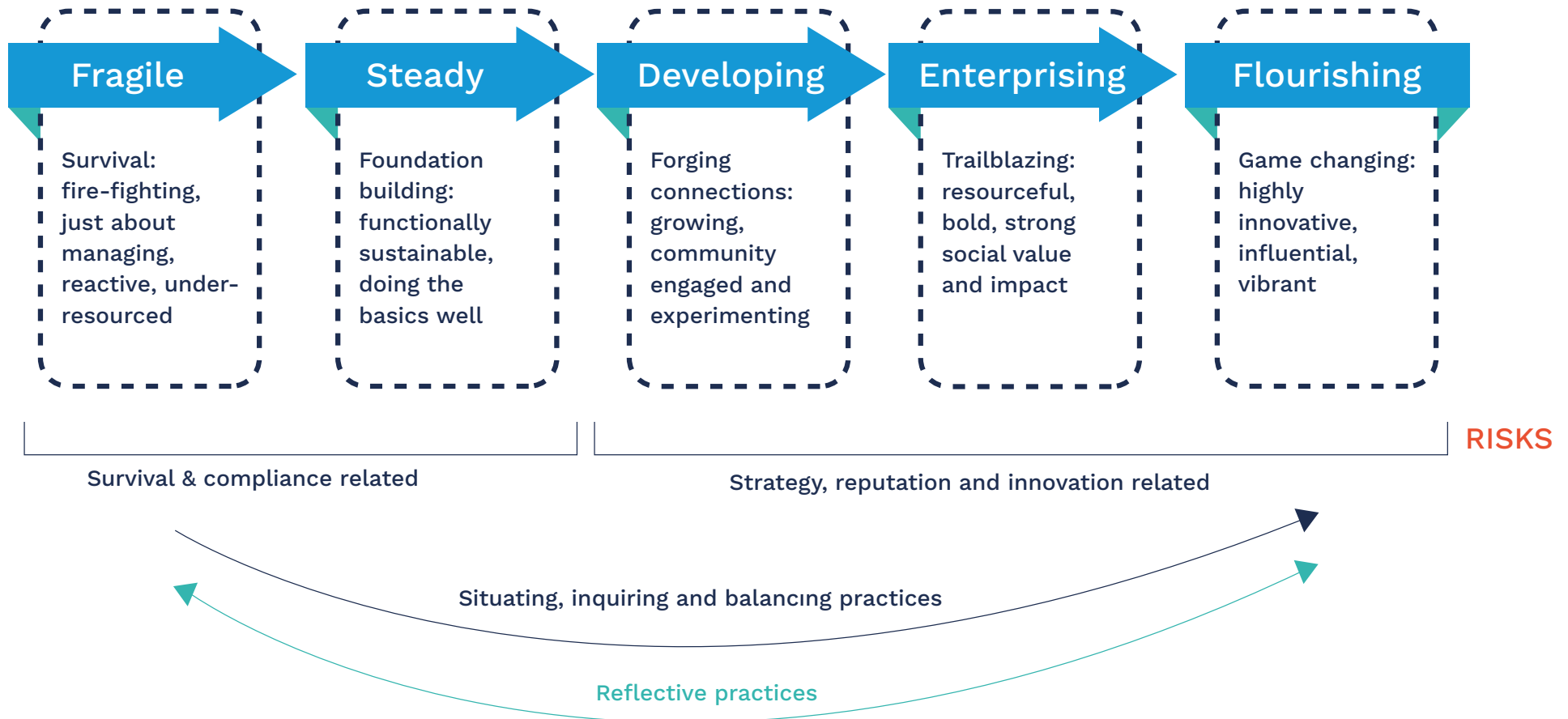
V&A East Storehouse (Alchemy)

Findings

1. Traditional operating models for museums are increasingly difficult to sustain and are no longer fit for purpose
2. There is evidence in the sector of museums that are developing flourishing characteristics including adopting growth mindsets, systemic thinking, community engagement and re-purposing their assets to generate commercial income.
3. Museums are encouraged to think in terms of future readiness and to move to a place of preparedness for what might come in the years ahead.
4. A range of enabling factors to support museums in the future are identified including policy alignment, diverse funding models, digital skills development, and strong inter/transdisciplinary networks.
5. Museums need to build on existing assets, adapt operating models, enhance financial skills, and embrace social enterprise and partnerships to flourish.

Flourishing

A flourishing continuum is proposed covering characteristics from fragility to flourishing. It is intended to provide prompts for discussion and it is recognised that a museum might have functions that are at different stages across the continuum.



Flourishing characteristics

1. Inspirational leadership, local, regional or national influence, contributes to sector debates
2. Sustainable surpluses, strong reserves or endowment, invests in R&D
3. Visionary governance, meta level outlook, highly engaged
4. Operations are adaptive, learning focused, support experimentation and are open to change
5. Programme is transformative, co-created, recognised regionally, nationally etc
6. Collection is fully activated, and is an exemplar for stewardship and access
7. Seen as a cultural and social innovation lab, well disseminated impact
8. Is seen as sector influencing, contributes to the debates around museum practice

Enabling factors

1. Policy and governance: alignment of policies and legal frameworks
2. Resourcing: diverse funding models with a focus on innovation
3. Capacity and skills: workforce development
4. Technology and infrastructure: affordable access to technologies and infrastructures
5. Networks and collaboration: expanded partnerships across sectors
6. Visitors and audiences: shared insights on visitor trends, support for co-creation
7. Monitoring and foresight: horizon scanning and trend anticipation



Bowes Museum, curiosity project
(Claire Collinson)



Judge's Lodgings

Facing the future

Museums face constrained public funding and rising costs, necessitating strategically building on existing assets, considering deaccessioning, re-wiring operating models, enhancing financial and commercial skills, and adapting funding behaviours. Clarity on business and operating models, flexibility, modular planning, and embedding reflection and research are vital.

Key strategies already being developed include expanding entrepreneurialism, deepening partnerships, and leveraging technology. Museums adopting growth mindsets, embracing social enterprise, and managing risk creatively are better positioned to flourish.

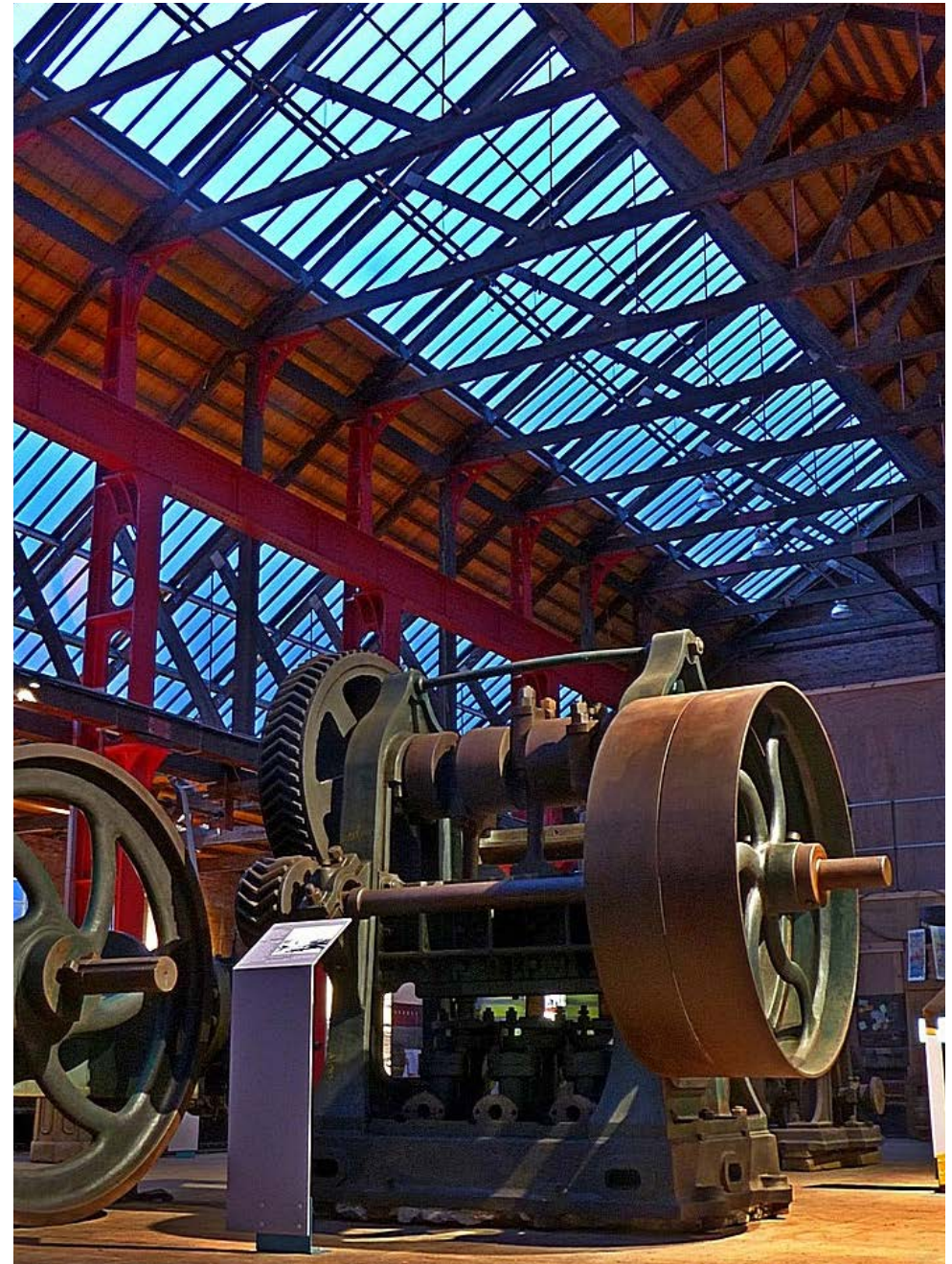


Image 1. Scottish Maritime Museum interior

Cover credits

Clockwise from top:

1. Mary Rose Trust
2. Cartoon Museum
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