



Department for  
Digital, Culture,  
Media & Sport



# Museums' Partnership Framework

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# The Partnership Framework

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The **Mendoza Review: an independent review of Museums in England (2017)** found that: "The national museums are committed to ensuring people across the country have access to their collections and, whilst there is room to extend this work, their current national footprint is not always understood. They are also committed to sharing expertise with non-national museums, and there are many examples of best practice, including long-term loans to historic houses, skill-sharing programmes, some Subject Specialist Networks, and spotlight loans and partnership galleries. However, the nationals do not share information on where they are working with other museums or what they are doing, so their overall impact across the country can appear inconsistent, or be underplayed."

The Review team recognised the excellent work already taking place, but suggested it should be more strategic to ensure audiences and museums outside London get what they need from nationals. As such, they made the following recommendation:

Recommendation 12: The nationals will, through the National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC), work with DCMS, ACE and HLF in building a new 'partnership framework' to extend their reach throughout England in a more strategic way. It is expected that this will be based on an assessment of museums' and audiences' needs, informed by existing activity. It will cover areas that include: collections management, learning, working with audiences, digital, international, and commercial. The partnership framework (including implementation plan) will be in place by September 2018 and will form part of the wider Action Plan set out in Recommendation 2, with oversight by DCMS.

# NMDC response: the Partnership Framework

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National museums are committed to working with the wider sector to ensure that partnership working is more strategic and better communicated, and that evidence of impact and best practice is collected and shared more widely. NMDC has responded to the Mendoza Review recommendation by developing a Framework of 4 aims and 9 corresponding actions, some of which are to be delivered by national museums and others by Arts Council England (ACE) and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The Partnership Framework is an ongoing project, and the following implementation plan is a working document. We anticipate that the actions detailed here will continue to evolve through future interactions with colleagues across the sector. This iterative approach will enable us to develop the most practical and valuable responses to the needs of the museum sector and its audiences. The Mendoza Review highlighted and identified some of these needs, and subsequent evidence gathered through the Partnership Framework will further add to our understanding.

In the absence of additional funding to deliver the Partnership Framework, the aim is to find practical and low-cost solutions to identified needs. This may be in the form of, for example, extending existing networks or programmes, linking up activities where practical, or seeking external funding for new partnership projects.

Although the Mendoza Review only applies to England, NMDC recognises that the UK museum sector is one ecosystem and is therefore keen to reflect that partnership working extends beyond borders and to ensure that activities include museums from across the country.

National museums are also working to deliver recommendations from the [Strategic Review of DCMS-Sponsored Museums \(2017\)](#), which was published alongside the Mendoza Review. Here the particular area of focus is on enabling a more consistent approach to lending and borrowing for the benefit of the whole museum sector.

By seeking input from non-national museums and engaging widely with colleagues across the museum sector, we aim to develop a Framework that will enable more strategic, collaborative and impactful partnership working for the benefit of museums and audiences across the UK.

Aim	Actions/outputs	Responsibility	Timescale	Assessment
<p><b>1. Develop a more strategic approach to partnership working across national museums</b></p>	<p><b>1. Tri-annual meetings of national museums' partnership leads to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share information on current partnership activity</li> <li>• Share evaluation of partnership work and lessons learnt</li> <li>• Hear and discuss updates on regional need – ACE to input and/or attend meetings as appropriate to share evidence</li> <li>• Discuss potential individual and collective actions to address strategic needs or gaps, which could include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Extending current networks or inviting new partners to join existing projects and programmes</li> <li>– Revising content, locations or scope of individual museums' current or future partnership programmes</li> <li>– Developing ideas for new joint partnership projects</li> <li>– Identifying potential funding sources for further partnership activity.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>NMDC</p>	<p>Tri-annually from Autumn 2018</p>	<p>Post-meeting updates to DCMS for ongoing assessment of changes to practice and delivery on Mendoza priorities.</p> <p>First report to DCMS in March 2019 on priorities and proposals for 2019/20.</p>
	<p><b>2. Nominated NMDC member director to act as partnerships champion:</b>            Diane Lees (Director General of Imperial War Museums) to lead for first year, with reassessment in Sept 2019. Responsibilities to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairing a meeting of DCMS, ACE, NMDC and nationals' partnership leads to finalise Framework (summer 2018)</li> <li>• Bi-annual catch-ups with DCMS, ACE and NMDC reps to discuss progress and agree priorities</li> <li>• Updating NMDC members at tri-annual NMDC meetings</li> <li>• Reporting to DCMS Ministers via annual meeting.</li> </ul>	<p>NMDC</p>	<p>Summer 2018</p> <p>Bi-annually</p> <p>Tri-annually</p> <p>Annually, from Spring 2019</p>	<p>Annual meeting to report progress and priorities to Minister from Spring 2019.</p>

Aim	Actions/outputs	Responsibility	Timescale	Assessment
	<p><b>3. Collating and sharing evidence of regional need:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACE to collate information via regional Relationship Managers, Museum Development and National Portfolio Organisations on the needs of regional museums and audiences, coldspots and priorities for partnership working</li> <li>• ACE to seek input from sector bodies and Sector Support Organisations (SSOs)</li> <li>• ACE equivalents in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales will be invited to share similar evidence.</li> </ul>	ACE/NMDC	Ongoing from summer 2018 – first report presented at the first national partnerships meeting	Regular updates to inform tri-annual meetings.
<p><b>2. Share information and best practice on partnerships more widely</b></p>	<p><b>4. Annual professional exchange event to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share and promote best practice – including project case studies, evaluation/lessons learned, skills sharing etc</li> <li>• Share updates and information on sector networks, partnership programmes, training and funding opportunities</li> <li>• Respond to regional or thematic needs as identified via ACE and others across the sector</li> <li>• Enable networking – invitees to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Reps from across the UK sector including national (DCMS, devolved and MoD), regional, local authority, university, independent museums</li> <li>– Sector support bodies including SSOs, SSNs, MDOs, ACE and UK equivalents</li> <li>– Relevant sector organisations, stakeholders and funders e.g. MA, AIM, UMG, HLF, Art Fund, English Heritage, National Trust.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• NMDC to fund and organise with input from ACE and other sector colleagues</li> </ul>	NMDC/ACE	Annually	Evaluation of conference from participants.
	<p><b>5. Investigate potential options to share expertise and best practice in non-collections areas</b> (i.e. those are not usually part of national partnership programmes e.g. commercial or international).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Including identifying where mechanisms already exist and signposting</li> </ul>	NMDC/ACE	March, then ongoing	Part of regular updates to DCMS.

Aim	Actions/outputs	Responsibility	Timescale	Assessment
<b>3. Collect and share better data and evidence of impact of partnership activity</b>	<b>6. Annual data collection from national museums:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To capture the full range of museum-to-museum partnership activity in three broad categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Sharing collections</li> <li>– Sharing expertise</li> <li>– Impacts on audiences.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• National Museums in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales to be invited to participate in data collection for a UK-wide picture</li> </ul>	DCMS	Autumn 2018 then May/June annually	Review impact following publication of the first report (see below), and review scope of data for possible improvements.
	<b>7. Annual report on national museums' partnership activity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on annual data collection exercise.</li> </ul>	DCMS	Annually from Spring 2019	
	<b>8. Investigate possible options for a digital tool to share information, as part of the Museums Action Plan.</b>	DCMS	Spring 2019	Monitor use and effectiveness with target audience
<b>4. Enable more effective, strategic and frequent loans across the UK</b> <i>(from Strategic Review)</i>	<b>9. New NMDC guidelines for lending</b> to promote best practice across the sector.	NMDC	Autumn 2018	Evaluation of impact one year after publication

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