



**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.

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?

For more ideas about how to use the AIM Hallmarks, including more open questions to be used to prompt further discussion, see *Preparing to Prosper* and

AIM's guide to *Successful Away Days*, both available on the AIM website, www.aim-museums.co.uk
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