

In 2016 Arts Council England (ACE) commissioned a consultation with the arts and culture sector about how it should invest public funding from 2018. A report has now been issued, much of which of course relates to the whole range of arts and culture, but consultees did include a substantial number of museums – which are recognised as having different needs from arts organisations.

We have printed off the report (66 pages) and have read, skimmed or skipped our way through it. It introduces some important changes likely to have an impact on museums. The report has already been re-blogged to members of the Association of British Transport and Engineering Museums.

The report can be found here [Read the report and our response >](#), but maybe few of you will wish to read it in full. The following notes reflect our understanding of the information available at present.

AIM Chairman, Richard Evans, says “AIM is really pleased to see the changes ... and we really welcome the new opportunities they will create for English museums of all shapes and sizes. ... AIM appreciates having been involved as the ideas have been developed – and we can see that ACE have listened very carefully to museums.”

John Orna-Ornstein, Director of Museums at ACE, says “England has some of the world’s best regional museums, and many of these are independent. Arts Council England’s new plans for funding will make a significant contribution to supporting the development of ... museums, small and large, in the coming years.”

Commenting on the individual changes heading by heading–

- *For the first time, museums and libraries will be a part of our investment portfolio.*
This seems to mean that integrated funding for arts, museums and libraries will provide museums with access to a larger pot of money than before, but equally it may make competition between organisations more intense. Richard Evans says “ ... A broader portfolio of investment by ACE – reaching all types of museums across England including many more independent organisations – will create real and lasting benefits. ... to our museums and how they work. ... Sometimes the best ideas are to be found in the very smallest museums.”
- *Funding agreements for our National Portfolio organisations [NPOs] will be lengthened from three to four years, allowing them more time to plan.*
Self explanatory.
The National portfolio is made up of 663 organisations receiving funding from ACE.
- *The National Portfolio will be made up of three bands, enabling us to match our expectations of organisations to the scale of our investment.*
The three funding bands being introduced are £40,000-£250,000; £250,000-£1,000,000; over £1m. These three bands will have commensurate expectations and approaches to monitoring and reporting, so that those who receive less funding will see their administrative burden reduced, and those who receive the most investment, will be required to do more to contribute to all five of ACE’s goals, to drive diversity, nurture talent, and to play a key role in supporting the wider sector.
- *A new category of ‘Sector Support Organisations’ will be introduced into the National Portfolio, for organisations offering support services to our sector (rather than producing arts and culture themselves).*
The term used in the report is ‘Service Organisations’, which seems to be about suppliers rather than umbrella organisations.
- *Changes to Grants for the Arts and Strategic Funding.*
Grants for the Arts is to be renamed Grants for the Arts and Culture. John Orna-Ornstein says “This National Lottery supported flexible fund won’t be accessible to NPOs, but will be of real interest to many other museums. It has a broad remit – to develop great art and cultural activity for everyone – and it will be open to applications for between £1,000 and £100,000 on a rolling basis. This is a significant new potential source of funding for museum activity. Richard Evans says “AIM particularly welcomes the news that all museums [except NPOs] will be able to apply to the Arts Council’s largest fund, Grants and to Arts and Culture This is a bold move – and the right one we think – to help ACE deliver its own goals and ambitions.”

John Orna-Ornstein says “Arts Council England will open a wide range of its strategic funds for 2018-2022 to museums. These funds will focus on areas which include building resilience, diversity and ensuring that great culture is accessible to the widest possible audience.”

- *Support for individual artists and creative practitioners.*

There will be special provision to help individuals to develop their creative practice. Maybe we could claim that the “museums” equivalent of “artists and creative practitioners” would be individual preservationists who make their collections available to the public. Anyone willing to test this suggestion?

If this report is to go into Newslink perhaps it should carry the caveat that it is mainly about museums and may not be of interest to all private collectors.