

AIM Heritage Trustee Newsletter – **EXTRACTS** July - August 2018

New resources for boards from AIM

AIM is launching two new 'how to guides' for trustees. The latest in its series of advice notes for boards, the new guides help boards make sure that they have secure foundations in place for their organisation's governance. The guidance notes have both been written by Adrian Babbidge, a leading expert on board development and structures.

Keeping up to Date provides a step-by-step guide to reviewing an organisation's governing document and legal form. It offers guidance on the benefits of different legal structures and outlines the process to follow if you are considering changing your legal structure.

Doing a Governance Audit provides a simple but comprehensive checklist that boards can use to ensure that they have all the policies and procedures they need in place and are reviewing them on a regular basis.

Both guides can be downloaded from the [AIM resources for Trustees webpage](#) along with the other guidance notes launched earlier in the year. We will be adding to the series over the coming months: please let us know if there are topics you would like to see covered.

Special AIM event for Chairs: Being an Effective Chair

29th November 2018, 11am – 3pm

BVSC conference rooms, Birmingham, 138 Digbeth, Birmingham, B5 6DR

How to book: <https://www.associationofchairs.org.uk/events/being-an-effective-chair-10/>

Are you Chair or Vice Chair of an independent museum or heritage charity? Are you looking to be more effective in your role?

At AIM, we know that the role of Chair although rewarding can be lonely. In a smaller organisation, there is often little resource to support the Chair and limited time to reflect on the nature of the role.

AIM has worked with the Association of Chairs to bring AIM members a workshop to provide you with practical guidance and tools to help you be more effective in your role. The workshop has been developed with the complexities of chairing a smaller organisation (with an annual income of under £1 million) in mind; such as operating with limited resources and individuals often having both operational and governance roles.

This workshop is being run by AIM in partnership with the Association of Chairs, as part of their Beacon Programme. Some places are reserved for Chairs and Vice Chairs of heritage charities, who will have the opportunity to work together and share insights with Chairs and Vice Chairs from the broader charity sector.

Outcomes

By the end of this workshop, you will:

- Be clear about your role and legal responsibilities
- Understand what can help you be effective
- Have practical tools to help you run effective meetings
- Have gained insight and top tips from other Chairs of smaller organisations

Lunch will be provided. Places cost £20 each and travel bursaries to support the cost of travel are available from the Association of Chairs when booking for the event.

To book onto the workshop, you will first need to register with the Beacon Programme. The Beacon Programme is aimed at Chairs and Vice Chairs of smaller charities in England with an annual income of under £1 million. Registration is simple and free: you can register here: <https://www.associationofchairs.org.uk/beacon/registration/>

Financial Strategy and Governance for Trustees: new free workshops

AIM's new series of skills development workshops for trustees focus on what it means to provide effective financial leadership for your organisation. All trustees – not just treasurers – share responsibility for the financial health of their charity. This session is designed to offer a refresher in basic financial management skills, as well as the opportunity to develop higher level skills in financial strategy and financial leadership. Trustees will have opportunity to network and share experiences with other heritage trustees. The workshops will cover:

- The financial challenges facing the sector
- Financial strategy and governance
- Risk management and financial policies

The workshops are being presented by Caron Bradshaw, CEO of the Charity Finance Group. AIM recently launched a new partnership with CFG – see below for more details – and Caron spoke about financial leadership at AIM's recent conference, with great feedback from AIM members.

Three workshops, all hosted by colleagues from Museum Development, offer trustees a choice of dates and venues:

Wednesday 26 September, 09:30– 13:30, Museum of London, London Wall. Hosted by Museum Development London.

Book now: <https://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/supporting-london-museums/training-and-skills/skills-plus>

Thursday 15th November 11 – 3.30, East of England, hosted by SHARE.

Bookings open soon. To reserve a place, please contact helenw@aim-museums.co.uk

Thursday 7 February 2019, 10:30 – 15:00, Lancashire Conservation Studios, Preston. Hosted by Museum Development North West.

Book now: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/financial-strategy-and-governance-workshop-tickets-47945629669>

Prospering Boards: new consultants and new opportunity to apply

AIM has relaunched its programme of one-to-one support for boards of museums in England, Prospering Boards. The programme offers the opportunity to apply for a programme of bespoke support from a pool of expert consultants. Six new consultants with different specialisms are joining the pool this year, and we are offering short micro-consultancies for the first time as well as longer programmes of support.

To read more about the opportunity and the new consultants, see: <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/prospering-boards-new-opportunity-apply/>

For an informal discussion ahead of an application to the programme, please contact Helen Wilkinson, helenw@aim-museums.co.uk

Navigating risk: new guidance from the Association of Chairs

The Association of Chairs has launched the latest in its Chair's Challenge series, on Navigating Risk. The guide aims to help Chairs ensure that risk management is seen as a core part of the board's role, and not a perfunctory tick-box exercise. More details

about the series and the new resource are available here: <https://www.associationofchairs.org.uk/resources/chairs-challenge-series/>

Manchester network meeting

Robert Moss, chair of Manchester Art Gallery Trust, the fundraising trust for the gallery, invites fellow trustees to a networking meeting on at Manchester Art Gallery on Thursday 26th July at 4.00 pm. The meeting will explore the possibility of establishing a forum for trustees: to share experiences; to offer support; and to enjoy each other's exhibitions, productions and events.

We realise that the timing of this newsletter makes the meeting rather short notice, but Robert is also keen to hear from trustees who might be interested in future meetings. To register your interest or attend, please email Ruby James, r.james@manchester.gov.uk

In focus: getting the right level of information for your board

In each issue of the AIM Heritage Trustee Newsletter, we'll be offering some quick-fire tips on a challenging issue, written for AIM by Alex Lindley.

Being in the know: are you a scissors or pencil person?

When Truman Capote observed "*I believe more in the scissors than I do in the pencil*", he was referring to the importance of concision and prudent editing in truly great writing – of quality over quantity. It's a conundrum that often plays out in a different context for museum boards, particularly in relation to the information that boards need to have a good overview of the performance of their organisations.

I'm often tempted to ask for more information from the executive team, particularly if things aren't going to plan or when there are big decisions to be made. However, not only can this be a significant additional burden for staff or volunteers, it can also detract from good monitoring and decision making – particularly if the information reported doesn't reflect how the museum is doing on the stuff that really matters.

So how can we make sure that we're seeing the right information and aren't overwhelmed or distracted by irrelevant data? Some good rules of thumb for board reporting include:

1: Going back to your museum's core purpose – what it exists to do – and measuring things which are indicative of success in achieving this.

Income and expenditure is an important aspect of this, but other factors such as visitor numbers or volunteer satisfaction are equally vital. Always ask whether the data is relevant to measuring how well the museum is achieving its goals or to monitoring legislative compliance.

2: Understanding what information you can collect accurately and easily.

Trustees need to be able to demonstrate that their decisions are based on sufficient and appropriate evidence, but many of us will have experienced the frustration of having to rely on unreliable data from an antiquated CRM system or a 'quirky' database. If your systems aren't fit for purpose, investing in these could be critical to ensuring you have the right information to make decisions in the best interests of the museum. The Charity Commission has more information on this here <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/its-your-decision-charity-trustees-and-decision-making/its-your-decision-charity-trustees-and-decision-making#principles-for-good-decision-making---in-more-detail>

3: Considering how often the board needs to see different types of information.

For example, health and safety incident data should probably be a standing agenda item for every board meeting, but a review of the Declarations of Interest register would usually suffice less frequently. An annual calendar can be a useful tool to ensure

everyone's clear on what reports are needed for each board meeting. For more guidance about how often to review different aspects of governance, see AIM's new guidance note on Doing a Governance Audit: <https://www.aim-museums.co.uk/resources/for-trustees/>

You can probably tell from all this that I'm a scissors person myself – a firm believer that less is more – but only if it's the right stuff delivered at the right time...