



Evaluation of the West Midlands Museum Development Programme

By Wootton George Consulting

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I am pleased to be able to share with you the results of the external evaluation for year one (2015 -2016) of the new Museum Development programme for the West Midlands region.

Our Vision for the programme, which is managed by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust and funded by Arts Council England is for the 'West Midlands Museum sector to develop, thrive and collaborate to ensure future sustainability through cross cultural programmes which excite and inspire diverse audiences and deliver a professional customer focussed visitor experience.'

The evaluation demonstrates that we have started to make significant inroads into achieving our Vision for Museum Development but there is still much to achieve. We look forward to continuing to support Accredited museums in their future development; as well as working in partnership with sector organisations and fellow Major Partner Museums to develop skills, share knowledge and build capacity to ensure the sector flourishes.

Anna Brennand

Chief Executive
Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Evaluation Outline

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust commissioned an evaluation of the West Midlands Museum Development Programme.

The programme aims to develop the museum sector, building capacity, resilience and skills to create a sector that inspires and builds diverse audiences. The work covers the counties of Birmingham and the Black Country, Herefordshire, Staffordshire, Shropshire, Warwickshire and Worcestershire. The programme was developed to respond to the needs of Accredited museums and those officially working towards Accreditation.

This evaluation covers the period April 2015 to March 2016. The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust was successful in securing the contract to run the programme from 2015-2018, after it had previously been delivered by the Marches Network. Due to TUPE delays the staff were not in post until late October 2015, with the programme starting in November 2015. The time needed to induct staff, and to revise and plan the work programme, meant that delivery started in January 2016.

The evaluation covers:

- Information about the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust
- Context: background to the project and information about the West Midlands museum sector
- Project Overview
- Review of Delivery and Impact
- Key Learning Points and Future Activities



Lapworth Museum of Geology

Executive Summary

Overall the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust has delivered a thorough programme of work which is already having a strong impact on the sector. The team had to develop an innovative programme of work which delivered the key outcomes in a third of the original timescale, following a nine-month delay and a need to gain the trust and support of the sector.

The main findings of the evaluation are that:

- The team has achieved the key outputs and has strong evidence of positive outcomes across the sector.
- The team has delivered an impressive programme of work in a contracted timescale, and it is expected that with the time and stability needed, the programme will gather momentum.
- The method of delivery which has involved focusing on programming which meets a range of goals and objectives, was perhaps originally a response to the time constraints, has been incredibly successful and should be continued.
- The approach of involving a wide range of professionals from outside the sector, which was initially met with scepticism from across the sector, has been successful and should also be continued.

Suggestions for the future are that:

- The original work programme was structured to respond to Arts Council England goals and there is a lot of crossover in these. It would be advisable to look at how this work programme could be streamlined, for ease of programme management.
- The evaluation and monitoring systems, whilst robust, could be reviewed to gather less data, making them more manageable.
- The frequency of Steering Group meetings should be reviewed.

Overall, the team has succeeded in delivering a strong, exciting and varied programme of work, within a short timescale. The approach has been both efficient and effective, and has undoubtedly benefited the West Midlands museum sector.



Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Mission, Aims and Organisational Information

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust has two key aims of education and heritage conservation.

Vision:

'To be a world leading museum of industrial heritage'.

Mission:

'To operate with entrepreneurial flair and creativity in order to inspire and engage people in the world changing story of the Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site'.

The organisation was founded in 1967 and is a registered charity. It currently employs over 200 people (equivalent to c. 160 full time jobs), and hundreds more indirectly, through tenanted properties and the wider economy. 400 people regularly volunteer at the organisation.

The organisation does not receive core statutory local or central government support. The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's activities are supported by earned income and charitable grants. More than half of the organisation's revenue income is from visitor admissions, with the remainder earned through other operations and grant income.



Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust



Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Activities

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust cares for 36 scheduled monuments and listed buildings, and a group of 10 museums set in the beautiful Ironbridge Gorge World Heritage Site providing inspirational experiences, about the world changing story of the birthplace of the Industrial Revolution, for visitors of all ages through fun and memorable days out.

In addition to the 10 museums, the sites in the Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's care include a research library, a tourist information centre, two youth hostels, archaeological monuments, historic woodlands, housing, two chapels, and two Quaker burial grounds.

The 10 museums receive over 500,000 visitors each year, of which c. 70,000 are visits from schools. More than 50% of the UK visitors live in the West Midlands region, and 7% of the total visitors are from outside the UK.

Role in the Sector

The Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust is well placed to lead the sector development in the West Midlands.

In addition to being one of the most innovative and entrepreneurial museums in the UK, the organisation has a wealth of experience relating to managing collections, developing audiences, backed up by sound management and financial resilience.

Context: West Midlands Museum Sector

Museums in the West Midlands

There are currently 143 Accredited museums across the West Midlands, and 12 working towards Accreditation. Within the sector there are 14 Designated Collections, of which 11 are within museums.

The sector in the West Midlands includes Local Authority run, Ministry of Defence, University and independent museums.

The West Midlands museum sector was previously supported by the Marches Network from 2012-2015, which supported 140 museums to achieve and maintain Accreditation. The Network consisted of Local Authorities across the West Midlands area.

Current Issues

There are a range of opportunities and challenges currently facing the sector, which broadly fit into two categories: Collections & Audiences, and Leadership & Resilience.

Collections and Audiences

There are new opportunities with high profile, popular collections such as the Staffordshire Hoard, which has regional, national and international interest.

Cultural engagement in the West Midlands is increasing, as it is across the country. The Arts Council England *Taking Part Survey* shows that in 2013/14, 45% of adults in the West Midlands had visited a museum or gallery in the previous year. This is below the national attendance of 53%, and a slightly lower increase in attendance since the 2008/09 period: 9% against a national increase of 10%.

The diverse population in the West Midlands and new collections, mean that there are many opportunities to engage new audiences.

Leadership and Resilience

The museum sector in the West Midlands is currently facing a range of challenges, primarily as a result of the financial constraints of Local Authorities. As Local Authorities across the region seek to make budget cuts, this has resulted in funding for museums being cut, and staff posts (and organisational expertise) being lost.

This reflects a national issue – the *Museums Association Cuts Survey 2015* notes that museums across the UK have had unprecedented cuts in public funding. In a survey of 115 respondents:

- 18% said that they had closed a part or branch of their museum in the last year, or planned to do so in the year ahead
- 13% had decreased temporary exhibitions, 29% had seen a reduction in the number of school visits, and 20% reduced free events
- 11% would consider financially motivated disposals in the next year
- 45% said they had increased numbers of volunteers and 24% reduced paid staff numbers

In addition, 61% reported an increase in visitor numbers. The report highlighted the impact of local authority cuts as *“having a devastating impact, and is starting to threaten museum buildings and collections.”* The report also highlighted that local authority museums tended to have falling income, whereas independent museums saw a small (3%) overall increase in total income. Some of the worst affected museums reported *“skeleton services and... reduced public offer. Others spoke of low staff morale, falling visitor numbers and recruitment freezes.”*

These issues are reflected locally, with museums facing a range of challenges, as a result of the difficult financial situation that each Local Authority is facing:

- Cost neutral budgets covering museums, with reduced grant funding
- Job losses, and the associated loss of skills within organisations and the sector as a whole
- Threats to collections and reduced funding for exhibitions
- Reduced opening hours
- Concern over closures of museums, or the need to find independent management

Whilst the cuts have a greater impact on the Local Authority run museums, they also effect the wider sector, resulting in a loss of provision, staff and skills. These changes are also having a direct impact on the Museum Development Programme, for example, the lack of Museum Mentors means that the Mentor Programme is under pressure, and could in turn affect Accreditation.



Lapworth Museum of Geology

Project Overview

Aims and Mission

The vision for the programme is *“for the West Midlands Museum sector to develop, thrive and collaborate to ensure future sustainability through cross-cultural programmes which excite and inspire diverse audiences and deliver a professional customer focused visitor experience.”*

The mission is *“to lead, empower and equip museums within the region to build capacity, increase resilience, develop skills and share knowledge to ensure a thriving and exciting sector”.*

Overview

The programme is focused on five key areas as outlined below, working with Accredited museums and those working towards Accreditation. The goals match the Arts Council England strategic goals.

Collections and Excellence

The programme aims to support excellent long-term collections care, storage and access through commissioned programmes of work and the development of professional expertise.

Audiences and Opportunity

The programme aims to build diverse audiences and develop visitor experiences, using physical and digital means.

Resilience

The programme aims to support museums to become more sustainable through innovative and entrepreneurial ways of working.

Leadership

The programme aims to ensure that the sector has a diverse and suitable skilled workforce. This includes increasing the diversity of volunteers, including young and corporate volunteers.

Young People

The programme aims to encourage the next generation to be excited and enriched by museums.

Delivery

The work is delivered by the Programme Manager and three full time Museum Development Officers, which are all employed by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust, and each have a geographical remit (Birmingham and the Black Country, Herefordshire and Worcestershire, and Shropshire and Warwickshire). The fourth Museum Development Officer is fully funded by Staffordshire County Council. The original delivery plan set out the intention for the project to be overseen by a Steering Group, meeting quarterly.

Review of Delivery and Impact

Summary

The delivery of the programme faced a tough challenge with the full team not being in post until late October 2015, with planning starting in November 2015, and delivery in January 2016. As a result, the team have had to work to deliver 12 months of activity in just three months.

Whilst it has not been feasible to deliver everything as originally envisaged, the team has successfully delivered the key areas across all five goals, making an initial but significant impact in each area. The need to condense the work programme has worked in the team's favour, and they have joined up the crossover in the original work plan and tested different ways of delivery.

In the four months ending March 2016, the team of five had planned and delivered:

- 22 events reaching 161 people, representing 60 museums
- A two day conference reaching 170 museum representatives
- 98% feedback across all events and workshops rated as good (25%) or excellent (73%)

Across the goals, there are a number of reports being produced. It should be noted that due to different agencies and freelance staff writing the reports, there is a lack of consistency in the style and format. The team is producing a style guide to ensure that there is consistent branding, and a consistent approach to written documentation. Whilst this will delay publication of some reports, this is a sensible approach and will benefit the programme in the long term.

It should be noted that in the original application there was considerable crossover in the workplan, as this was structured in line with the Arts Council England goals. To avoid duplication in the report, these activities are only reported on once and an Appendix has been provided to identify the areas of crossover.

Delivery

The delivery of the work has been impressive, given the need to create a new team, and produce a programme that had had a considerable gap between April – December 2015.

The team of five people includes two who worked on the Marches Network development programme and three new members of staff (including the Programme Manager), who are not from within the museum sector. This, combined with the overall change in management in the programme has meant that the team has had to work to establish their presence and build rapport, trust and relationships. They held 'Meet the Team' events in each area to do this, allowing museums the opportunity to contribute to the plans and to raise any queries or concerns.

The balance of staff who had previously worked on the programme and people who were from outside the museum sector has worked well, and has meant that new approaches have been adopted, such as the use of third parties to undertake mystery shopping, and widening the range of training provided.

The work is supported by a Steering Group, made up of Local Authority partners and a representative from Arts Council England, enabling them to have an input into the work and contribute strategically. However, the reality of the challenges facing the Local Authority partners at the current time has meant that this is more problematic than envisaged for all involved.

It is suggested that it may be more productive and supportive to the programme to have one annual meeting which everyone is able to attend.

Evaluation

The original workplan had an evaluation objective for each goal, rather than a single overall objective for evaluation.

The internal monitoring and evaluation systems are well structured, thorough and robust. The team has established quantitative and qualitative systems for each event and activity. Evaluation forms were handed out at the end of each activity, which resulted in the vast majority of participants completing forms.

The team has also worked on developing a bespoke Customer Relationship Management system. Whilst this has not yet been finalised, this will enable the team to compile even more comprehensive reporting information, including every contact made with each museum. This will allow the team to have a broader view of their impact on the sector and individual museums.

The evaluation forms, whilst thorough, provide information which was not wholly necessary for the purposes of this evaluation and the team should review whether all of the information is necessary. For example, a lot of information was collected in relation to the venue and catering – yet in most cases, it was obvious during the training whether the venue was a success and would therefore be used again. There was also a lot of specific data on the trainers (such as the pace and pitch of the training), which would be helpful for the trainer, and the team in deciding which trainers to book, which could also be reduced.

Goal 1: Collections

This goal relates to the development of the excellence, care, storage and use of collections within museums, along with standards and knowledge relating to these.

Quality

This objective aimed to:

- Support the 143 Accredited museums and 10 working towards Accreditation to work with their communities to engage with the collections
- Help four museums access specialist collections knowledge
- Commission a report on specific areas of collections care and storage

Delivery

The Museum Development Officers have had contact with an impressive 134 museums in the four months, including one to one meetings with 91 museums.

Alongside this, five museums accessed specialist support through the Expert Eye programme, exceeding the original target. The case studies from this programme will be written up and shared on the programme website in line

with the style guide, given the reduced timescale it is unsurprising that this is yet to happen.

Impact

The programme has achieved its goal and delivered an impressive range of support regarding collections, both from Museum Development Officers and the specialists.

The Expert Eye programme was well delivered and exceeded the initial target. Feedback from the experts was excellent, in terms of the delivery, activity and overall aims. In all five museums the experts were able to share specialist expertise and advice to support the development of interpretation and improved access to the collections (with work still continuing with one collection).

Additional suggestions included:

- Follow up to Expert Eye support after three or six months
- Wider application of the approach
- Further dissemination of the advice and information

Developing Collections

This objective aimed to:

- Commission mapping of regional orphan collections in terms of current position, future risk and scale, scope and ownership
- Commission a toolkit for the management and rationalisation of archaeology archives and stores
- Commission a report on digital asset management to be disseminated using social media

Delivery

Considerable progress has been made with the orphan collections and archaeology rationalisation reports (including digital asset management), both having been completed and are currently being prepared for publication.

Using Collections

This objective aimed to:

- Support and mentor two museums in commercial use of collections
- Inspire contemporary collections to engage diverse communities, with one event delivered
- Share best practice in innovative and digital online resources, sharing results online
- Broker museum partnerships to focus on key objects of significance, involving at least three museums

Delivery

The team has delivered in all of these areas, making use of the March conference to reach larger numbers of museums:

- Plenary on 'Commercialising Collections' held at the March 2016 Fresh Perspectives conference, reaching 25 museums
- Plenary 'Open to All' held at the March 2016 Fresh Perspectives conference, reaching 54 museums
- Digital Horizons programme launched with three events reaching 24 people from 19 museums, of which nine have been selected for further mentoring support
- Artist has been working with three museums and the film will be shared online

Feedback from The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery:

"The Expert Eyes project is a wonderful way of sharing knowledge and improving best practice ... and has fostered a relationship of help and co-operation that will continue into the future. ... I believe that the Expert Eyes project should not underestimate its power to create much more long lasting co-operation between organisations, who will choose to share expertise and knowledge beyond their involvement with each other as part of the project itself."

Feedback on 'Open to All' plenary:

"[It has] motivated me to think about how we can make sites even more accessible."

"The talk by Ann Johnson ('Open to All') made me think about access to museums and the real need to engage with everyone and to think of adaptations which could be done to make everyone's visit more enjoyable."

Feedback on Broadening Digital Horizons training:

"I found the session to be really interesting and useful – it's great to have support and for people to want to develop museums."

"Finding out how easy and straightforward it was to put the trail together has really inspired me to do something back at the museum."

"It showed how we can afford digital ideas."

The team has delivered a wider programme than expected. Although due to the time constraints, a new delivery approach was implemented, it has resulted in the team reaching many more museums, and nine being selected for further mentoring. As in other areas, consideration should be given to continuing this approach rather than the original plan.

Impact

An evaluation of the Plenary speakers on 'Commercialising Collections' and 'Open to All' found that:

- 36% found the speakers to be excellent
- 53% found the speakers to be very good
- 11% found the speakers to be good
- 19% found that the 'Open to All' Plenary was the most useful part of the conference on that day

The feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction overall with the conference, and people identified specific actions as a result of the above sessions.

The Broadening Digital Horizons training showed that the vast majority of people found the workshops to be good or excellent:

- In terms of relevance: 80% found it excellent, and 20% good
- In terms of interest: 96% found it excellent
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 84% found it excellent, and 16% good
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 80% found it excellent, and 20% good

Standards

This objective aimed to:

- Broker, mentor and share skills between museums locally, regionally and nationally
- Commission four training events on collections care and management

Delivery

This work was delivered in a range of ways:

- Five Meet the Team days were run, reaching 57 people from 39 museums. However, in addition the conference was attended by 170 professionals, which provided mentoring opportunities during the breaks.
- Three Stop the Rot and one Integrated Pest Management training events were run with Birmingham Museums Trust, reaching 36 people from 14 museums.

Impact

The Meet the Team events were important in bringing people together through formal events, the first in over nine months. These need to be built on, and feedback from across the range of workshops show that time for networking should be incorporated into all events.

The Stop the Rot training showed that the vast majority of people found the workshops to be good or excellent:

- In terms of relevance: 50% found it excellent, and 43% good
- In terms of interest: 80% found it excellent, and 20% good
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 71% found it excellent, and 29% good
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 59% found it excellent, and 34% good

The Integrated Pest Management training showed that the vast majority of people found the workshops to be good or excellent:

- In terms of relevance: 67% found it excellent, and 17% good
- In terms of interest: 80% found it excellent, and 20% good
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 80% found it excellent, and 20% good
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 67% found it excellent, and 33% good

Leadership

This objective aimed to:

- Develop support networks for new and recently qualified curators and develop the Young Curators Network

Delivery

This work has been delivered as part of the Engaging Young people with Museums Scheme, the Museum Outreach Officer for Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery shared a Young Curator's project where a specialist worked with young people with a) social, emotional and mental health problems, and b) social, emotional and behavioural health issues.

Goal 2: Audiences

This goal aims to support museums to build diverse audiences and develop visitor experiences. There was some overlap originally in terms of digital development (with Collections) and grants (with Resilience).

Customer Service

This objective aimed to:

- Pilot Customer Service Excellence with three museums with one dissemination event
- Support to three museums with Tourism Award or VAQAS and commission support for 10 museums to carry out access audits

Delivery

A Developing and Improving Customer service programme has been launched, and 14 museums have been supported through a Mystery Shopper scheme, which took place in March 2016. The scheme looked at service provision feedback with particular focus on young adult (aged 18-24) and mature visitors (aged 50+).

Reports are currently being prepared for each museum, which will form the basis of plans for training and participation in Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's Customer Service Excellence Scheme. This target has been exceeded and will contribute to the development of service provision in a range of museums.

One workshop was held to introduce the Open to All Access programme with 11 people from 10 museums. Subsequently, Access Audits have been conducted across 10 museums with individual reports being prepared and a toolkit has been developed which will shortly be available online.

Tourism and VAQAS was discussed at the conference as part of the event planning workshop.

Feedback on

Stop the Rot training:

"Finding out how quick and easy ways to prevent damage and look into it / causes of it, and knowing not to panic."

Feedback on Integrated

Pest Management training:

"Just astonishing information – new to me. Really appreciate being made to think about these things and be made more aware."

"I enjoyed the session, the practicals were especially useful."

When asked what they most enjoyed, attendees at the Access Audit training said:

"Great day, gets me thinking about the challenges of improving accessibility."

"I enjoyed the group discussions, finding out about other museums and their problems."

"Hearing from people with different abilities and their experiences of visiting museums."

"The parts where Ann described her own experiences and the part where we examined and discussed each museum's online access statements, and attitudes."

Impact

An interim report from the mystery shopping has already identified strengths and areas for improvement, in relation to the programme's key goals:

- Aggregate responses regarding welcome, queueing and entry was high (92%), as was orientation (94%), with information desks scoring less well (78%) – although visitors were acknowledged and treated well, there were some missed marketing and promotional opportunities.
- In terms of facilities, responses for toilets (87%) was lower than expected, and there is scope for improvement in café and restaurants (82%) and shops (77%).
- The exit touchpoint scored the lowest performance rating (73%), which can be improved to leave visitors with a positive final memory of their experience.

Whilst it is too early to assess the overall impact of this work on individual museums, the interim report provides a wealth of information for museums to use. The approach should also be commended, in terms of using a third party, rather than the previous peer approach.

The Access Audits training feedback showed that the training was incredibly well received and that it created a lot of motivation to create change:

- In terms of relevance: 60% found it excellent, and 40% good
- In terms of interest: 60% found it excellent, and 40% good
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 70% found it excellent, and 30% good
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 90% found it excellent, and 10% good

Diversifying Audiences

This objective aimed to:

- Support participation in national programmes such as 'Kids in Museums', 'Museums at Night', 'Family Arts Festival' and 'Heritage Open Days', helping 10 museums participate in four schemes with success evaluated to inform the focus for years 2 and 3.

Delivery

This is one area where the team has not been able to deliver in Year 1, due to the dates of the national programmes.

Customer Insights

This objective aimed to:

- Raise regional awareness of the Arts Audience Insight research to target least engaged groups with two museums working with two groups.
- Develop the Mystery Shopper review programme focusing on more mature visitors and Young People Shoppers, with two young people events and one mature visitor event.

Delivery

The Engaging Young People in Museums scheme was launched with nine people attending, reaching eight museums. As part of this Nuneaton Museum and Art Gallery presented their work with young people (see Collections).

The mystery shopping detailed reports will outline feedback on engaging young adults and mature visitors.

Impact

Given the timescales it is unsurprising that the work focused on one target group, and making an impact in this area.

The Engaging Young People training showed that most people found the workshops to be good or excellent:

- In terms of relevance: 60% found it excellent, and 30% good
- In terms of interest: 70% found it excellent, and 30% good
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 70% found it excellent, and 30% good
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 70% found it excellent, and 20% good

Goal 3: Resilience

This goal aims to support museums to become more sustainable through innovative and entrepreneurial ways of working. Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust is recognised for its success in this area, and their experience as such adds great value to this goal.

Own Resilience

This objective aimed to:

- Provide a Small Grants Fund with funding of £25k available in total
- Explore opportunities for external funding for museum development with two successful bids per annum

Delivery

The Grants Fund was delivered through a single round in November, with £36,695 distributed to 16 museums for a range of projects including audience surveys, school engagement, developing a teen social media campaign, launching a new festival for hard to reach groups and creating Special Educational Needs and dementia accessible spaces. This exceeded the target and showed a wide range of ideas in the sector, with a total of 24 applications received.

In addition, the organisation also had a Small Capital Grants Fund, with £115,200 awarded to four organisations, with a total of 12 applications received. The grants were awarded to museums to increase their resilience through the purchase of capital assets to develop national loans.

There was insufficient time to generate successful funding bids but meetings were held with Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Connect and Culture 24 to understand and identify potential sources of funding. In particular, the Programme Manager has started to investigate potential funding related to health and wellbeing for year 2.

Impact

In most cases, it is a little early to assess the impact of individual grants, and therefore the whole programme. However, evaluations of two grants have already been completed.

When asked what they

most enjoyed, attendees said:

"Hands on sessions – although a scary thought, made you process your ideas and think how [they] could work with [your] own museum."

"Preparing and using the digital games."

"Positive approach to main problem of engaging children."

Further Comments:

"Really well planned and interesting day, lots of ideas to take back to the office."

"Great interactive workshop, felt comfortable to ask questions and good networking."

**The Museum of
Cannock Chase said:**

"The project was successful in that we were able to gather together comments from visitors to the museum, non-visitors and potential partner organisations all in one report. By working with a consultant we got more 'honest' feedback about the organisation and what may be possible for its development with a funded audience development project."

**Winterbourne House
and Garden said:**

"The VSAs [Visitor Service Assistants] have all been very positive about the training and talk more proactively about the visitor experience ... We have made immediate visual changes to the site, including signs and tweaking some of the interpretation layout, which has already [been] met with positive comment from visitors and volunteers."

"Improving our visitor experience will ultimately improve our visitor numbers, with repeat numbers and more word of mouth, as well as subsequently improving our income generation."

The Museum of Cannock Chase received funding to research the geographical distribution and motivation for visiting the museum from its current audience. This is enabling the museum to evaluate their product and marketing strategy to enhance visitor numbers and return visits. As a result, they have used the findings to inform a bid to the Arts Council England Museum Resilience Fund, and have developed a Welcome Point visitor data recording system.

Winterbourne House and Garden received funding to improve their visitor experience, improving data collection on who their visitors are and giving their visitor service assistants a sense of ownership of the visitor experience. Funding paid for signing up to Audience Finder, and bespoke training for staff, based on a report by Heritage Insider. Measures identified in an action plan to improve the visitor experience are already being put into place. Front of house staff were involved throughout and they now feel more positive and involved.

Given the strength of the feedback on these two grants alone, it can be assumed that the grants are having a positive effect on the sector overall, meeting a range of the West Midlands Museum Development Programme goals.

Accreditation

This objective aimed to:

- Support museums to achieve and maintain Accreditation, take over the regional Accreditation Advice service, promoting opportunities to undertake Museum Mentor roles and hold one mentor event per annum.

Delivery

In addition to contacting 134 museums, including one to one meetings with 91 museums, the team has met with the Accreditation Manager at Arts Council England. Those museums whose Accreditation falls due in 2016/17 were invited to an Accreditation workshop, which four people from four museums attended.

Regular requests for Museum Mentors are put out through newsletters, but there is an awareness that the financial constraints and time pressures for potential Mentors means that this process will be challenging.

Impact

Evaluation forms were completed by all four attendees attending the Accreditation workshop:

- In terms of relevance: 25% found it excellent, and 75% good
- In terms of interest: 50% found it excellent, and 50% good
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 50% found it excellent, and 50% good
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 25% found it excellent, and 75% good

Innovation and Adaptability

This objective aimed to:

- Improve Museums Development online presence
- Develop the Entrepreneurial Museum programme, with two training sessions held

Delivery

A bespoke new website was launched in December 2015, and since then 24 sector partners have been actively promoted on the website. In addition, 22 information bulletins or e-newsletters have been issued since October 2015, reaching 595 people per issue.

Five training workshops were held at the Fresh Perspectives conference including:

- The Art of Creative Thinking
- Developing an Entrepreneurial Trust
- Successful Corporate Volunteering
- Ensuring your Event is a Success
- Swerving the Shredder – how to write a successful fundraising application

Impact

The training workshops held at the conference, show how the team has been able to add value and exceed targets in a small space of time. The range of workshop topics is impressive, catering to varied interests and needs.

Feedback on The Art of Creative Thinking and Developing an Entrepreneurial Trust workshops showed that:

- 44% found the speakers to be excellent
- 44% found the speakers to be very good
- 12% found the speakers to be good
- 18% said that the Developing an Entrepreneurial Trust workshop was the most relevant part of the day for their role

Feedback on the Corporate Volunteering, Event and Fundraising workshops found that:

- 42% found the speakers to be excellent
- 45% found the speakers to be very good
- 13% found the speakers to be good

Governance

This objective aimed to:

- Signpost support from external bodies and partners
- Provide up to six micro-consultancies to support mentoring schemes and provide governance issue briefings online and live

Delivery

The team has worked with 60 external bodies or partners and the programme has also benefited from Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's own networks.

With the time constraints, the team delivered six workshops for 20 people, reaching 15 museums:

- Dealing with Change: three workshops
- Accreditation: one workshop
- Herefordshire Peer to Peer: three workshops

When asked what they

most enjoyed, attendees said:

"Small group, good, less intimidating. Interesting to hear from the other museums – their experiences. All the exercises good, stimulating and thought-provoking., Really useful to give ideas on how to proceed and communicate with the Trustees."

Further Comments:

"Small group was good. I don't think I would've talked so openly about things maybe."

Feedback on The Art of Creative Thinking' had mixed feedback:

"Fantastic... too short"
"Fab, really gave me food for artistic thought and confidence"
"Waste of time"
"Good to have a change of pace"

Feedback on Developing an Entrepreneurial Trust was most consistent:

"Completely relevant to the future we may face – excellent, informed presentation"
"Fantastic insight"
"Very interesting case study"
"Best session of the day for me"

Feedback on the Corporate Volunteering workshop:

"Good, hands on, thought provoking session"
"Not considered before. Very interesting"
"Good practical activity"

Feedback on the Event workshop:

"Very encouraging to hear REAL experiences""Very useful in terms of legal stuff""Would have liked a practical activity for a workshop"

Feedback on the Fundraising workshop:

"Particularly useful"

When asked what they most enjoyed, attendees said:

"All was fascinating ...
found this new subject
so interesting
and very useful.

It has changed my views and
hopefully I will carry the
knowledge learnt forward
to the workplace."

"Horizon scanning was
most valuable."

Further Comments:

"Excellent training – the trainer
was authoritative, engaging,
funny and challenging, with
lots of thought provoking
ideas and resources."

"I think you should run this
again as I can think of other
managers who would
benefit from it"

Impact

The feedback from the Dealing with Change workshop showed that:

- In terms of relevance: 100% found it excellent
- In terms of interest: 100% found it excellent
- In terms of meeting the purpose for attending: 80% found it excellent
- In terms of motivating people to take action: 80% found it excellent, and 20% good

Business Models

This objective aimed to:

- Support peer to peer learning to include forum, fundraising, co-marketing and use of collections for commercial benefit including up to six events/workshops.

Delivery

A total of seven Plenary sessions were held at the Fresh Perspectives conferences, aimed at sharing information and best practice, reaching c.170 museum representatives over the two days.

Topics included: Fundraising, Diversity and Equality, The Arts and Museums, Commercialising Collections, Helping Your Museum Prosper, Giving Your Museum a Head Start and Managing Change.

Impact

Feedback on the Plenary speakers across the conference found that:

- 39% found the speakers to be excellent
- 49% found the speakers to be very good
- 12% found the speakers to be good

Resilience of Museum Development

This objective aimed to:

- Work with other Museum Development providers to benefit from two shared space initiatives
- Work with at least two partner organisations to help build capacity in the sector, strengthening alliances and promoting cross-sector working with universities and the third sector.

Delivery

The shared space initiatives weren't feasible in the timescale. This will now be considered in year 2.

The programme worked with the University of Birmingham on the Archaeological Rationalisation programme and the report will be shared online shortly. Wave-length CIC was commissioned to carry out Access Audits with 10 museums.

Leadership

This objective aimed to:

- Support peer to peer learning, actively participating in the National Museum Development Providers group

Delivery

The Programme Manager has attended three meetings and has developed a good working relationship with the other representatives.

Goal 4: Leadership and Workforce Development

This goal aims to ensure that the sector has a diverse and suitably skilled workforce. The nature of the deliverables means that the impact will be assessed in future years.

Leadership

This objective aimed to:

- Broker connections with a wide variety of external partners, commission one session for six museums working with new partners

Delivery

A specific Change Programme was commissioned to assist museums going through a period of significant change. The work was split into two groups (Independent Trusts and Local Authorities) for the first workshop, with the groups coming together for the second. Eight people attended, reaching seven museums.

Impact

As outlined in the previous section, this workshop was incredibly well received with 100% finding it excellent in terms of relevance.

Partnerships

This objective aimed to:

- Improve and develop opportunities for online sharing of information through use of social media with one best practice event being held.
- Support museums to develop cross-sectoral partnerships through at least two G4A applications
- Host an Arts Award training session for at least four museums and best practice dissemination event for Arts Award Advisors

Delivery

The team held five social media training sessions as part of the Meet the Team events, reaching 57 people from 39 museums.

Two museums submitted G4A applications, which were unfortunately unsuccessful and this will be taken forward in year 2.

The Engaging Young People with Museums scheme was launched and nine people, from eight museums attended a training session by the Programme Developer for Arts Awards. In addition, the Museum Development Officer leading on Audiences has been working with the Dudley Glass Museum, attended the Arts Awards ceremony and will develop a case study for online dissemination.

Workforce Development

This objective aimed to:

- Explore partnerships with other museum development providers

Delivery

The Programme Manager has attended three meetings of the National Museum Development Providers Group and will be attending regional South West and East Midlands meetings in the first quarter of year 2.

Volunteering

This objective aimed to:

- Hold an event to promote apprenticeship opportunities across all areas of museum services
- Share knowledge of corporate volunteering with one partnership brokered with corporate business involving at least two museums.
- Commission a report to explore FE colleges work placement schemes and promote and advocate for paid internships.

Delivery

As part of the Engaging Young People with Museums scheme, Rugby Museum and Rugby College are discussing their ongoing relationship and Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology provided an in-depth review to the changes in post-16 education. Following this a toolkit on 'How to Approach FE Colleges' will be produced.

The Fresh Perspectives Conference included a workshop on Corporate Volunteering and two toolkits on Developing a New Volunteer Initiative and Employer Supported Volunteering have been launched.

Diversity

This objective aimed to:

- Commission a regional needs assessment and deliver solutions online
- Support volunteer run organisations to attract a more diverse supporter base, with four museums supported.
- Commission work with a group of at least three museums to develop inclusive working practices, increasing diversity and disseminate learning.

Delivery

A Needs Assessment survey has been conducted by Equality and Diversity UK identifying areas of development for year 2 and a draft toolkit has been developed. This commissioned survey worked with 12 museums and included a focus on inclusive working practices.

As part of the Training Together programme, a need for specific peer to peer networks has been identified, including the development of a Volunteer Led Network, which will be taken forward in year 2.

Leadership

This objective aimed to:

- Explore joint working and initiatives with other Major Partner Museums and national partners

Delivery

The partnership has worked with a range of organisations:

- Birmingham Museums Trust on the delivery of collections care training
- West Midlands Museum Partnership
- AIM on the Fresh Perspectives conference
- The Collections Trust
- Shakespeare Birthplace Trust on the Fresh Perspectives conference
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Arts Council England
- Derby Museums Trust

Goal 5: Children And Young People

This goal aims to encourage the next generation to be excited and enriched by museums. Due to the duplication within the original application, most of the objectives are already covered by the previous goals, mainly the Engaging Young People in Museums activity.

The remaining objectives aimed to:

- Support museums to identify most appropriate forms of social media to increase engagement from young people and hold one event to share knowledge.
- Work with the Bridge organisation Arts Connect to support the development of services and activities for children and young people.

Delivery

The five social media training sessions delivered as part of the Meet the Team events, encouraged museums to think about how they can interact with younger audiences. This was also covered in the Broadening Digital Horizons and Engaging Young People workshops.

Two meetings were held with Arts Connect and the Museum Development Officer leading on this area has been invited to sit on the Arts Connect regional liaison group. In addition, Arts Connect participated in the Plenary session at the Fresh Perspectives Conference.



St John's House Museum

Key Learning Points and Future Activities

Key learning points for future activities are:

- The team should build on the momentum and bring stability to the programme
- The original work programme could be streamlined. The original plan was structured to respond to Arts Council England goals, which meant that there was a lot of crossover. This makes the management and evaluation more time consuming and it would be advisable to address this.
- The evaluation and monitoring systems, whilst robust, could be reviewed to gather less data, making them more manageable.
- The frequency of Steering Group meetings should be reviewed
- The approaches used as a result of the time constraints have been highly effective and should be continued (such as a conference which covers a range of training provision).
- Although there was some initial scepticism to team members and trainers from outside the sector, this has brought in new perspectives and should be continued. For example, Ann Johnson was one of the best rated speakers at the conference, and Wanjiku Nyachae was also particularly positively received.

The team has delivered an impressive programme of work, and it is expected that with the time and stability needed, the programme will gather momentum, improving outcomes for the sector across the West Midlands.



Fresh Perspectives Conference

Appendix One: Overview of Goals

This Appendix outlines the overall programme goals and the related objectives. As some activities met more than one objective and or goal this has been denoted in purple text; to provide a guide to where reporting information can be found. To avoid duplication, evaluation objectives for each goal are not included in this Appendix. (see page 10)

Goal 1: Collections

Quality

- Museum Development Officers will support museums to work with their communities to shape the future offer of museums and engage with collections. They will support the 143 Accredited museums in the West Midlands and the 10 that are working towards Accreditation.
- Museum Development Officers will work with four museums to facilitate access to specialist collections knowledge through brokering partnerships and collaboratively working.
- Commission one report per year for museums on specific areas of collections care and storage.

Developing Collections

- Commission work to map regional orphan collections in terms of current position and those at future risk including the scale, scope and ownership. One report will be commissioned and an action plan produced.
- Commission or secondment for archaeologist to identify and produce a toolkit for the management and rationalisation of archaeology archives and stores.
- Commission a report and action plan to investigate existing examples, target audiences and the need for digital asset management to improve access to and effective management of collections. Use social media to disseminate knowledge.

Using Collections

- Support and mentor museums at least two museums in the commercial use of their collections such as licencing, retail etc.
- Inspire contemporary collecting to engage diverse communities and encourage the exploration of contemporary issues and debates inspired by collections. As part of this deliver one event and evaluate its success.
- Support the use of and highlight best practice in innovative digital and online resources with collections at their centre. Share results on website and through blogs.
- Broker museum partnerships to focus on key objects of significance, building on the 'Technicians Tales' You Tube model. At least three museums and exploration of a G4A with a filmmaker will be explored.

Standards

- Museum Development Officers will broker, mentor and share skills between museums locally, regionally and nationally to share best practice and expertise as part of their core programme of work.
- Commission four training events and support on collections care and management as well as the conservation of historic buildings and industrial sites.
- Work with national organisation such as the Collections Trust as well as Subject Specialist Networks, the Museums Association, MPMs etc. to pair and match collections with specialists. Draw up an action plan for implementation following on from any reports and findings. See Collections>Quality>Objective Two

Leadership

- Work in partnership with Birmingham Museums Trust to support excellent standards of collections care with four training events being held. See Collections>Standards>Objective Two
- Develop support networks for new and recently qualified curators working with MPMs to explore potential for skill sharing placements and exchanges. Develop the nascent Young Curators Network.

Goal 2: Audiences

Funding and Resilience

- Provide a Small Grants Fund to support museums audience development programmes particularly cross-generational activities. Two application rounds per year with funding of £25k available in total. See Resilience>Own Resilience>Objective One
- Museum Development Officers will work with museums to support them in G4A applications, increasing the number of museums that benefit from this funding stream with at least five applications per year. See Resilience>Own Resilience>Objective Two

Customer Service

- Museum Development Officers will utilise Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's strength and commitment to customer service excellence (CSE) to provide a coherent approach to improving customer satisfaction across the region. Pilot CSE with three museums with one dissemination event.
- We will continue to seek ways in which to support museums to improve access and to offer different layers of interpretation to suit all audiences. Support to three museums with Tourism Award or VAQAS and commission support for 10 museums to carry out access audits.

Diversifying Audiences

- Focus on the continued development of cross-cultural spaces supporting museums to engage with partners to develop events, exhibitions and workshops, which widen the appeal of the museum and help improve financial resilience and increase audience numbers. This will include participation in national programmes such as 'Kids in Museums', 'Museums at Night', 'Family Arts Festival' and 'Heritage Open Days'. Support 10 museums participating in four schemes with success evaluated to inform the focus for years 2 and 3.

Customer Insights

- Museum Development Officers will raise regional awareness of the Arts Audience Insight research to target least engaged groups with two museums working with two groups.
- Museum Development Officers will work with Arts Connect to expand the Mystery Shopper review programme focusing on more mature visitors as well as continuing with the Young People Shoppers with two young people events and one mature visitor event.

Digital Strategies

- Using the East Midlands Digital Strategies Programme, further data on current priorities for museums on the digital agenda will be acquired and targeted support, through the Museum Development Officers, will be provided for three museums working with the consultancy support.
See Collections>Using Collections>Objective Three



Photograph by kind permission of The Pen Museum

Goal 3: Resilience

Own Resilience

- Provide a Small Grants Fund to support the sectors' needs with two applications rounds per year with funding of £25k available in total.
- Explore opportunities for external funding for museum development through applications for grants to trusts, foundations and external bodies with two successful bids per annum.

Accreditation

- Support museums to achieve and maintain Accreditation by providing consistent brokerage between museums, Accreditation bodies and mentors. Take on the Accreditation Advice service for the West Midlands linking with partners and hosting workshops/training, promotion of best practice, providing guidance and timely advice, providing a watching brief on Accredited museums and those working towards Accreditation. Advocate and promote opportunities to undertake Museum Mentor roles to relevant museum professionals and facilitate dialogue between potential Mentors and those seeing a Mentor. Hold one mentor event per annum.

Innovation and Adaptability

- Improve Museum Development's online presence through use of social media for information sharing, building partnerships and advocacy. Issue of consistent regular e-newsletters to meet users needs.
- [Commission work to encourage museums to develop new skills and promote and engage with new technology initiatives such as Museum Camp, Makey Makey fairs and Give & Gain days. At least six museums engaged over the year.](#)
[See Collections>Using Collections>Objective Three](#)
- Develop the Entrepreneurial Museum programme through training and workshops programmes supported by Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust's MPM programme with two training sessions held.

Governance

- Museum Development Officers will signpost accessible support, brokering appropriate support and development from external bodies and partners such as AIM, MA, Arts & Business, Heritage Alliance etc.
- Provide up to 6 micro-consultancies and work with partners to support mentoring schemes and provide governance issue briefings online and live.

Business Models

- Support peer to peer learning to include retail forum, fundraising, co-marketing and use of collections for commercial benefit via workshops, site visits and online information including up to six events/workshops.
- Work with partners to co-schedule activity

Sustainability

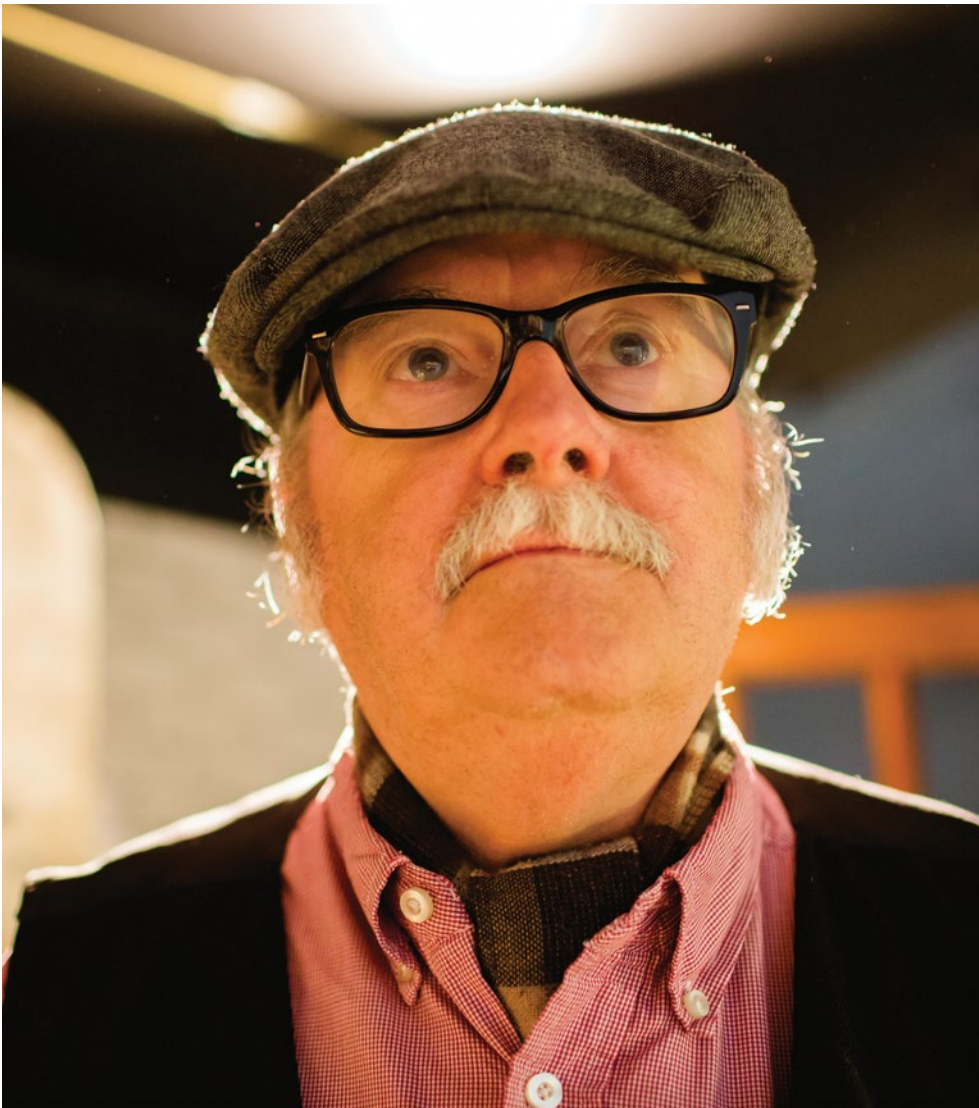
- Commission advice and support around technical demonstrator projects with four sessions being held.
See Collections>Using Collections>Objective Three
- Provide up to five micro-consultancies and work with partners to encourage mutual support building on best practice and knowledge exchange.
See Resilience>Governance>Objective Two

Resilience of Museum Development

- Work with other Museum Development providers to benefit from two shared space initiatives
- Work with at least two partner organisations to help build capacity in the sector, strengthening alliances and promoting cross-sector working with universities and the third sector.

Leadership

- Support peer to peer learning across museum development nationally, actively participating in the National Museum Development Providers group.



Museum of Cannock Chase

Goal 4: Leadership and Workforce Development

Leadership

- The museum development team will broker connections with a wide variety of external partners. The team will also commission and co-ordinate activity to drive and facilitate change in line with the needs of the sector with the commissioning of one session for six museums working with new partners.

Partnerships

- Improve and develop opportunities for online sharing of information through use of social media with one best practice event being held.
- Disseminate knowledge and information through Museum Development Officer network and existing links in to other sectors and through MPMs.
[See Resilience>Governance>Objective One](#)
- Support museums to develop cross-sectoral partnerships through at least two G4A applications
- Host an Arts Award training session for at least four museums and host best practice dissemination event for Arts Award Advisors

Workforce Development

- Explore partnerships with other museum development providers to share best practice and link training initiatives and focus.
- Develop training programmes, workshops and online information based on research in to local need.
[See Leadership>Leadership](#)

Volunteering

- Hold an event to promote apprenticeship opportunities across all areas of museum services
- Share knowledge of corporate volunteering models and promote tool-kits and on-line resources for volunteer working across the region e.g. Give & Gain Days with one partnership brokered with corporate business involving at least two museums.
- Commission a report to explore FE colleges work placement schemes and promote and advocate for paid internships

Diversity

- Commission a needs assessment for the region and deliver solutions using tool-kits and on-line resources where possible.
- Support volunteer run organisations to develop and deliver best practice and to develop recruitment approaches to attract a more diverse supporter base e.g. Jump Start, with four museums supported.
- Commission work with a group of at least three museums to develop inclusive working practices, increasing diversity and disseminate learning.

Leadership

- Disseminate volunteering learning, tool-kits and initiatives through an event, on-line via web and blog.
[See Leadership>Volunteering>Objective Two](#)
- Explore joint working and initiatives with other MPMs and national partners

- Develop sharing mechanisms for best practice in partnership with other museum development providers as well as AIM, ACE, MA etc. See Leadership>Partnerships>Objective Two and Leadership>Workforce Development>Objective One

Goal 5 – Children and Young People

- WMMD will provide Arts Award training at Bronze and Silver level and will support Arts Mark. 10 museums will be supported. See Leadership>Partnerships>Objective Three
- We will continue to engage with, promote and deliver activities under national initiatives such as the Family Arts Festival, Take Over Day and Museums at Night with 10 museums participating in at least four schemes. See Audiences>Diversifying Audiences
- Focus on the continued development of cross-cultural spaces supporting museums to engage with partners to develop events, exhibitions and workshops, which widen the appeal of their museum and help improve financial resilience and increase audience numbers. This will include participation in national programmes such as 'Kids in Museums', 'Museums at Night', 'Family Arts Festival' and Heritage Open Days. See Audiences>Diversifying Audiences
- WMMD will support museums to identify which forms of social media are most appropriate for their needs to increase engagement from young people and hold one event to share knowledge.
- We will work with the Bridge organisation Arts Connect to support the development of services and activities for children and young people.



Top: Royal Regiment of Fusiliers Museum (Royal Warwickshire)
Bottom: The Barber Institute of Fine Arts



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