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# A quick guide to Forward/Business Planning for Museums

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# Introduction

This resource is intended to be used by the governing bodies of museums that are reviewing their forward/business plan or embarking on the planning process for the first time. It takes users step by step through the basics of planning. It can be helpful, if appropriate, to work with your Museum Development Officer or your Accreditation Mentor.

Section 2 of the Accreditation standard requires museums to:

*Plan ahead and have the resources to deliver your plan*

and to evidence this by submitting:

*An approved Forward or Business Plan which covers the current and subsequent planning year*



# Introduction

This resource is intended to be used by the governing bodies of museums that are reviewing their forward/business plan or embarking on the planning process for the first time. It takes users step by step through the basics of planning.

It can be used as a presentation/guide to inform colleagues about the process, as the framework for discussion and break-out sessions or as a checklist. Use it flexibly to suit your museum's needs. The goal is to draw up a plan that is realistic yet challenging, has the support and ownership of the workforce and stakeholders and is a working document that will guide delivery and monitor progress.

It may be helpful, if appropriate, to work with your Museum Development Officer or your Accreditation Mentor.



# Before you start

Drawing up a Forward/Business plan is an empowering and creative process. It involves:

- Time and commitment
- Input from colleagues at all levels in your museum
- Input from external stakeholders and users
- Data and research
- Honesty

Be sure to keep everyone informed and give yourself plenty of time



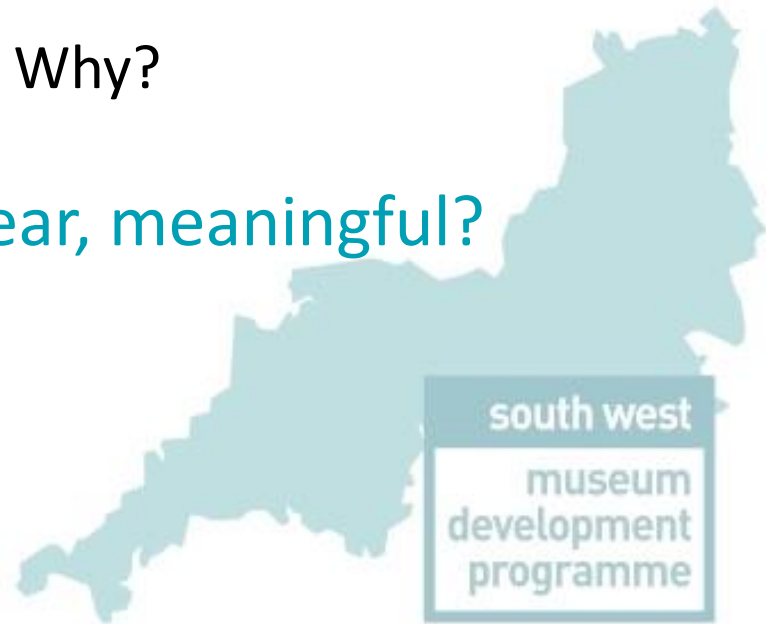
# 1. Check: your museum's Vision and Statement of Purpose (Mission)

Vision – an aspirational statement that is compelling to people inside and outside your museum community

Statement of purpose (mission) – a statement that expresses the museum's purpose:

What? Who? How? Why?

Are they still appropriate, clear, meaningful?



## 2. Review: your museum's previous Forward Plan

What has been achieved?

What didn't go so well?

Why was this?

What could have been done differently?

What lessons can be learnt?

Include others in the discussion, internally  
& externally



### 3. Research: your current internal and external operating environment

Internal: Visitor numbers, profile & trends; Financial position & income generation record; Governance; Workforce; Collections; Events & Activities; policies & plans that guide activity.

External: competition; social, financial & political trends; supporters & potential partners.

Gather the facts to be able to make informed decisions



# 4. Carry out: a SWOT and PESTLE analysis

Useful tools to help analyse the operating environment

Strengths & weaknesses: internal factors

Opportunities & threats: external factors

Political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors – are they opportunities or threats?

Use TOWS (enhanced SWOT) to analyse the results, draw conclusions and identify priorities

These 2 videos explain TOWS:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nPq2dvrH5jQ>  
& <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xquSq0MSAc>



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# 4. Example: TOWS or enhanced SWOT

## Internal Factors

External Factors		<b>Strengths</b> 1 2 3 4 etc	<b>Weaknesses</b> 1 2 3 4 etc
	<b>Opportunities</b> 1 2 3 4 etc	<b>SO Strategies</b> Use strengths to take advantage of opportunities	<b>WO Strategies</b> Minimise or overcome weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities
	<b>Threats</b> 1 2 3 4 etc	<b>ST Strategies</b> Use strengths to overcome, defend against or avoid threats	<b>WT Strategies</b> Minimise effect or impact of weaknesses and avoid threats

## 4. Example: TOWS or enhanced SWOT

### Internal Factors

		<b>Internal Factors</b>	
		<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Good relationship with local councillors</li> <li>2. Strong relationships with local press</li> <li>3. Strong collection of local natural science specimens</li> </ol>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lack of in-house IT expertise</li> <li>2. Lack of appeal to sponsors</li> <li>3. Reliance on town centre car parking</li> <li>4. Programming targeted predominantly at tourists</li> </ol>
<b>External Factors</b>	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Better relationships with other museums and local organisations</li> <li>2. Climate change rising up the agenda</li> <li>3. New businesses coming to the area</li> </ol>	<p><b>SO Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use councillors and local press for intros to businesses at local events</li> <li>• Develop a project to highlight biodiversity in locality in partnership with the industrial museum</li> <li>• Run 'welcome to our area' events for new businesses, using collections</li> </ul>	<p><b>WO Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-kind IT support from businesses?</li> <li>• Shared IT resource with other museums?</li> <li>• Recruit trustee from new business to provide new perspective on the board</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Redevelopment in town will reduce car parking spaces</li> <li>2. Other museums better placed for sponsorship</li> <li>3. Changes to curriculum = potential reduction in school visits</li> <li>4. LA prioritises local community needs</li> </ol>	<p><b>ST Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby local council re car parking</li> <li>• Involve press in car park lobby if necessary</li> <li>• Develop learning resource using natural science collections</li> </ul>	<p><b>WT Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address issue of car parking</li> <li>• Review diversification of income</li> <li>• Achieve an offer that responds to tourism and local community needs</li> </ul>

## 5. Develop and agree: Strategic Aims

They focus on the key areas of work and priorities identified through the preceding analysis.

Spell out your mission in more detail, expressing broadly how you plan to carry it out.

Ideally you will focus on a maximum of 5 aims, fewer if you are a very small museum.

They may take longer than the term of your plan to achieve.

**Do they connect back to your vision & mission?**



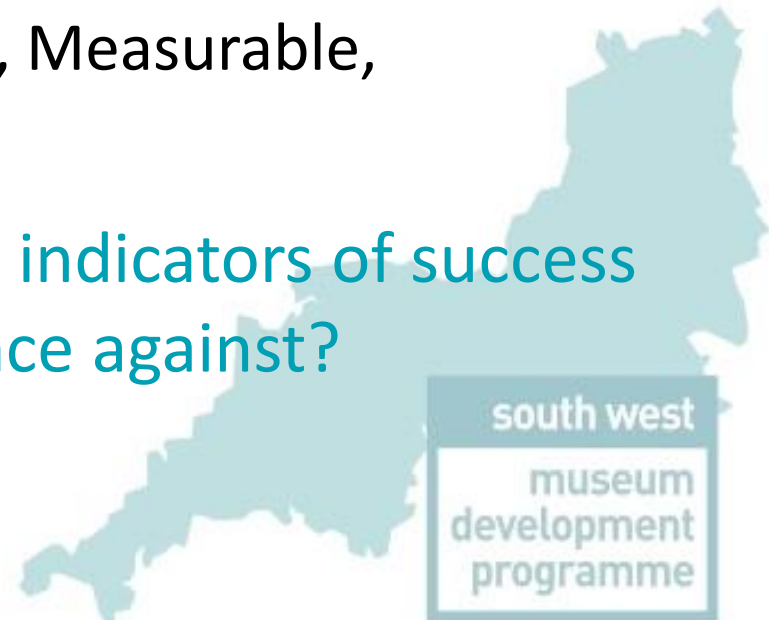
## 6. Identify and agree: Specific objectives

Your objectives are the specific steps that your organisation will take to deliver your aims.

Each Aim can usefully have three or four objectives, but there is no set number.

Objectives must be **SMART** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-limited).

Do your objectives provide clear indicators of success to measure performance against?





# Be realistic: Project or ongoing objective?

Remember:

Your Forward Plan covers the improvements you want to make in the way it operates, it looks after collections, it caters for users.

It covers work that you will do in addition to the day to day operation of the museum so it is important that you are realistic in the number of Aims and Objectives you identify.

By parcelling up internal, on-going work into 'projects' with defined timetables and resources, their impact on your museum's capacity can be measured and they can be included in the plan.

Include projects that you plan to do to realise a Strategic Aim, even if funding isn't certain yet – raising the necessary funds should be included in the action plan.

By including these 2 types of project in the plan, you can assess the impact of any unforeseen happenings on the likelihood of achieving your Aims – for example, if you take up the opportunity presented by this exciting digital project, how will this effect the collections care improvements we planned? What's the risk? What are our priorities?



# 7. Draw up: an action plan

- The steps you need to take
  - The resources you'll need (money, people, kit)
  - The time they need to be done in
  - The success criteria
- .....to deliver the specific objectives

Is the action plan a clear working document, able to be understood and used by the people tasked to carry out the actions and those tasked to monitor progress?



## 8. Draw up: a budget

- Include capital and revenue expenditure.
- Identify restricted and unrestricted funds
- Ensure your predicted income is realistic
- Identify potential sources of additional funds
- Include a contingency sum

Have you taken account of seasonal cashflow?



## 9. Carry out: an analysis of risk

Throughout the business planning process ask:

- What if?
- How likely?
- What could we do if?
- What might happen if we don't?

Use the following matrix, using the severity of impact and likelihood, to help quantify risk and prioritise the risks you should address





# 9. Risk: risk-assessment matrix

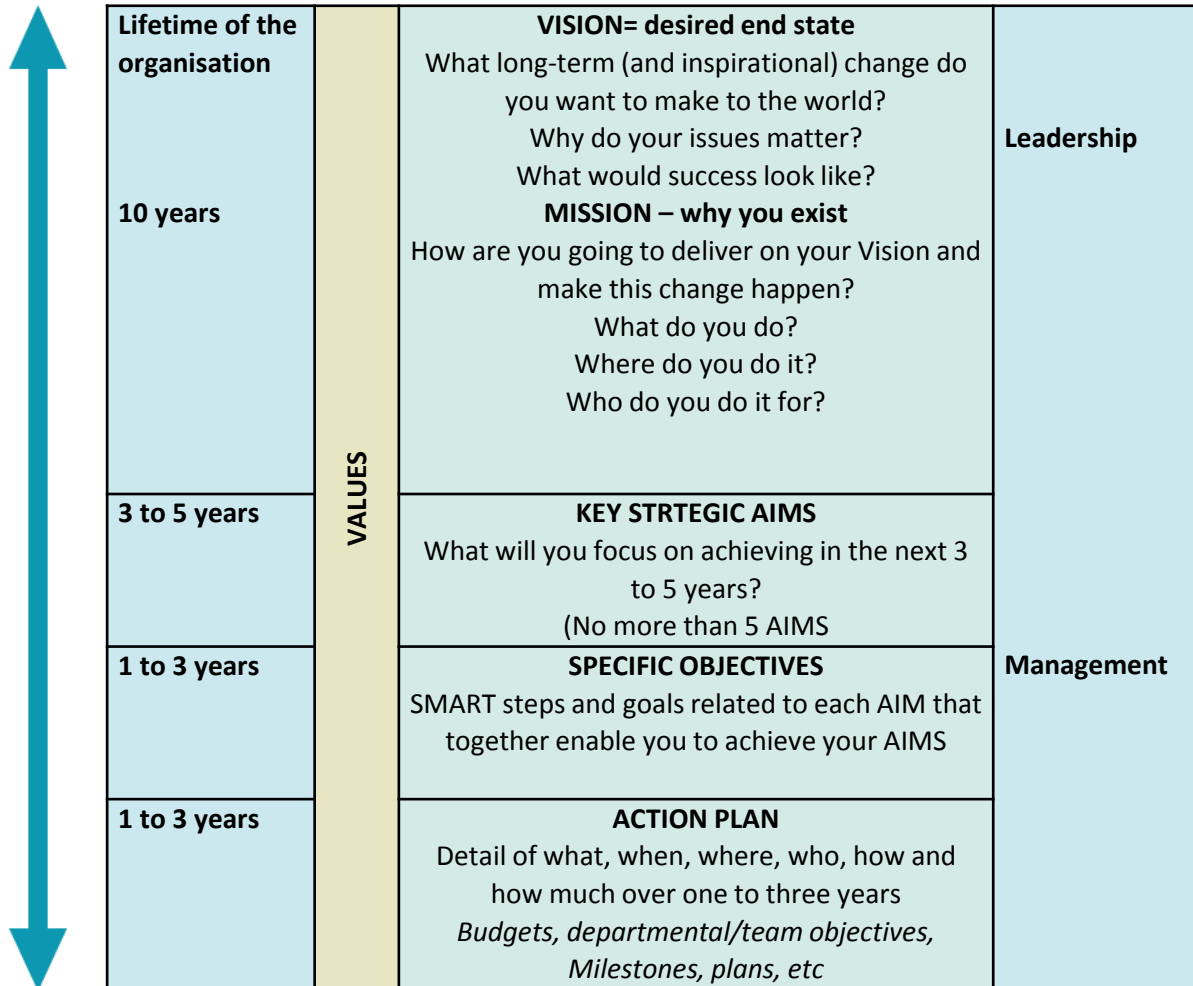
Weighting formula:  $XY+Y$

<b>Y = Impact</b>	<b>Extreme / Catastrophic</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>30</b>
	<b>Major</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>24</b>
	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>Minor</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>
	<b>Insignificant</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
			<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
			<b>Remote</b>	<b>Unlikely</b>	<b>Possible</b>	<b>Probable</b>	<b>Highly probable</b>

**X = Likelihood**

# 10. The golden thread

The link from the vision, through the mission, values, strategic aims and specific objectives



Based on a diagram © Alchemy Research & Consultancy

# 11. Write: the plan

- Executive summary
- Vision and mission
- Introduction to the museum: history, collections, visitor profile, funding, recent achievements, summary of current operating environment - be brief: detailed figures can be included in appendices
- Strategic Aims
- Specific Objectives
- Budget
- Analysis of risk
- Action plan

Is it an easy to navigate, intelligible, readable document?



## 12. Use: the Plan

- The Vision, Mission, Strategic Aims and Specific Objectives must be formally approved by the governing body
- The Governing body and management team should use the plan to monitor progress at least quarterly
- Circulate the plan: on your website, to friends, stakeholders and funders
- Ensure those that are tasked to deliver the plan – paid staff and volunteers - are briefed about it and have access to a copy to guide their work programme

Celebrate success when you achieve a milestone in the  
action plan



# 13. Follow: our Top tips

1. Allow plenty of time to develop the plan – time spent now will save time later
2. Spread the load: a small team with one lead person
3. Consult and invite input from others at the review and planning stages: workforce, friends, stakeholders, funders
4. Update the action plan at least yearly, the rest of the plan every 3 to 5 years

Begin the planning process again every three to 5 years –  
**do not use cut/paste or find/replace to update an existing plan**



# 14. Seek out: further information

SW Museum Development e-learning module

<https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/resources/e-learning-business-planning/>

Museum Accreditation planning templates

<https://southwestmuseums.org.uk/resources>

Collections Trust

<https://collectionstrust.org.uk/accreditation/organisational-health/planning-and-resources/>

Arts Council England

<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/document/business-planning-guidance-arts-and-cultural-organisations>

Museum in the Park Forward Plan

<https://bit.ly/2oITz0u>

Museum Accreditation support

[museum.accreditation@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:museum.accreditation@bristol.gov.uk)

## Use: this resource .....

- With museum trustees or managers to steer them through the forward planning process.
- As a powerpoint or a handout.
- If appropriate, in conjunction with SWMD's Good Business Planning diagnostic tool. Use the tool on a museum's existing plan to identify weaknesses before moving on to work on a new plan.
- You may find the Forward/Business Plan guidance & template and the blank templates for SWOT, PESTLE, TOWS & Action Planning useful too.

# Please provide: feedback

If you have:

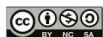
- any comments or suggestions on how it could be improved,
- Tips or anecdotes of how you've used it that would help other museums .....

then please get in touch. Thank you.

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