OUTCOMES OF MRF FUNDING 2016 - 2018

AMOT – The Army Museums Network

Background

In 2016, AMOT conducted a wide-ranging scoping project which established that there was a significant developmental need across the army museums sector in the UK. The report outlined a series of recommendations for short, medium and long-term growth to enhance the sectors resilience and with a focus on supporting collections care, management and access, whilst increasing opportunities for more stream-lined, diverse and fit-for-purpose governance structures, staffing and volunteering approaches.

As a result, AMOT were delighted to be successful in receiving a major funding award from Arts Council England to begin to put into place activity which would start to deliver against these recommendations. The Museum's Resilience Fund grant aimed to support the army museums sector develop resilience and sustainability, supporting governance change, building networks, and better understanding the needs of collections. Funding began in November 2016 and was to complete on March 31st 2018. The total funding available was in excess of £300,000.

The programme was entitled *Army Museums into the Future* and the following report outlines the activities we undertook, and the outcomes delivered as a result.

Delivery strands – What we did

The Army Museums into the Future project has been a major development initiative for AMOT to undertake. Bringing together new methods of working, new partnerships, and new areas of activity has been both a challenge and an inspiration. The following provides a snapshot of our outputs and outcomes:

Overarching project delivery

Taken in context, this project allowed AMOT to deliver a wide-reaching programme of resilience support to the army museum sector in England. At the beginning of the programme, AMOT operated with 1 Full-Time Director and 1 part-time Admin Assistant. Consequently, the prospect of delivering a £300,000 MRF programme was a challenge. AMOT worked with a number of skilled consultants to devise a programme delivery outline and put into place key methodologies and time-frame to ensure the project was delivered on time and to budget.

The project itself had 5 strands of activity. The following provides detail on each project strand:

1. Regional Network programme

This was possibly one of the most successful strands of work. At the beginning of the project, the majority of army museums worked in silos, found difficulty in communicating with each other for a number of reasons, and only met and networked once a year at trustee / director level at the annual conference.

We worked closely with the National Army Museum to help support the creation and development of these networks. The Scottish Regional Network acted as a template for us to use and develop supporting resources to be adopted and adapted by the West Network, Northern Network, London Network, Southern Army Museums Network, East of England Military Museums Network, Corps Museums Network, and the

development of the Oral History Military Museum Network. These networks came together to deliver projects on a number of themes which tested the ability of a) museums working together in close locality b) economies of scale c) reaching out to communities through shared objectives. We have established clear methods of working for these museum networks and many submitted to the AMOT grant scheme to continue their work in the next financial year. In addition, we
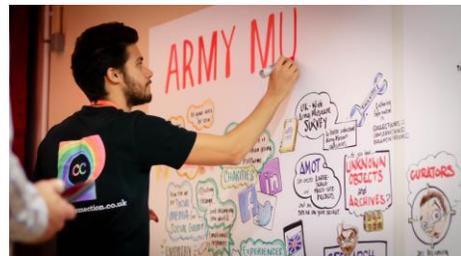
worked with a further three networks who were not ready to deliver projects together but did want support and they are now using our regional Network Tool-Kit available for download form our website. We now have in place bi-annual regional network lead meetings which will enable both AMOT and the NAM to share information with and through the networks and allow the networks to inform AMOT and NAM activity.

Additionally, we developed a range of case studies to support the sector better understand how to work together. These included a storage provision model, making collections of black heritage accessible, delivering touring exhibitions, and the potential of unifying at-risk museums.

The project also supported a change for the first time in AMOT's history, to its annual conference. Traditionally, this event is for the trustees / directors of museums and is very much about imparting information - valuable and needed, but without the ability to network, info share, and get feedback from the sector. Therefore, we introduced a second day to the conference which allowed for all of these things, and had resoundingly positive feedback - it engaged curatorial, education, and admin staff and volunteers for the first time, and one of the key comments was "Thanks for listening to us - it really does make a difference!". the outcomes of this event also helped to formulate our planning for the rest of the project.

As part of the programme, we worked with the regional networks to deliver an end of project event. We had originally planned this as a show-case event, but the sector said they wanted something more practical and linked to ensuring they had support after the end of the project. Consequently, the event took the form of sharing the project outcomes, but also providing hands-on resilience advice and guidance from funders, social investors, businesses, and third sector infrastructure organisations, and sign-posting to further future support. Ian McMillan acted as our conference poet and ensured the delegates were engaged and inspired!

Finally, we also delivered bursaries as part of this programme - this made a difference to the ability for some individuals to attend events who wouldn't have otherwise, however, there is still a need to make these more widely known across the sector to engage more and different people.

2. Governance Change Programme

This has probably been one of the most challenging strands of the project as though it is essential for future resilience within the Sector it requires a high level of commitment from individual Museums to address their

own strategic weaknesses, gaps in skills, knowledge, experience and expertise, and diversity. Whilst undertaking background research into this programme we identified other Governance support programmes available being delivered by cultural and museum specific support agencies (AIM/Museum Development Networks) and generic third sector (NCVO). Unlike our work strand these support programmes were being delivered over a longer time period (either ongoing or approximately 3 years) to enable organisations to engage, embed, and evaluate their governance development and progress within an appropriate time frame. Some issues we faced on this element of the project included:

- lack of recognition from museums that governance is a priority and thus essential for future resilience as it is the cornerstone of an organisation. This is an issue recognised not only by funding and investment organisations but also infrastructure support agencies as a priority that needs addressing not only at local level, but also national/strategic level
- museums didn't perceive they had any issues that needed addressing (again need on a national level to highlight importance and embed within organisational development support)
- many museums only meeting as a board twice a year, and thus didn't have another board meeting for another six months (when they would potentially put the request on the agenda)
- some museums not having the staff time and resource to invest in the programme – though recognising it was something they needed to do
- some museums not recognising the benefit of this support – no practical output like the other strands of the programme as internal development within the museum
- some museums securing support from other governance programmes thus not requiring AMOT support – whether AIM Hallmarks, local Museum Development Network support, NCVO etc.…

Despite all these challenges six museums engaged with the programme (though one museum also includes partnership development with two additional regiments), completed the initial survey and are being supported. Initial visits have been undertaken, individual governance plans are being developed, skills audits undertaken to address any gaps or weaknesses within the boards, and one to one support provided to help participating museums develop robust systems, processes, and frameworks to embed good governance practice within their museums. We also worked collaboratively with a local Museum Development Team with one of the museums to ensure added value, as by connecting the museums to other local, regional, and national infrastructure support agencies we can enable them to increase their own networks and contacts. What we have learnt from this project strand, and from discussion with the general army museum membership, and our partners from other sectors who are involved in Governance Change Programmes whether in generic third sector or cultural sector is that good governance is key to future resilience, but that it is one of the most difficult areas to address within any organisation. The aim

from the 'Into the Future' project strand is to use the information and support provided to those participating museums to inform and engage with the wider membership developing a more comprehensive governance support offer for the sector collaborating with a wide range of other partners. We are also looking at how we can work more collegiately with partners like the Charity Commission, and MOD to address any strategic governance issues identified to provide the sector with a more robust governance framework to work within on a national level.

Part of this programme is the development of a small suite of resources to help inform the sector about Good Governance practice in both video format and downloadable format. The resources will include top tips on what good governance is, top tips on being the essential trustee, top tips on having a diverse board, top tips on recruiting to the board, as well as templates for skills audits, trustee recruitment packs etc.....These resources will be available to all visitors to the AMOT website, and the videos will be uploaded on to the AMOT YouTube channel.

3. Understanding Collections

This strand aimed to have a better understanding of which collections existed, any that were at-risk, and a tool-kit for collections care and resilience. This piece of work was difficult to develop because by the time we came to survey the sector, they had survey overload! However, in the end we achieve 80 responses and conducted in-depth interviews with museums across the sector and collected a representative sample to inform the research.

The resulting study outlines that there are significant collections held within the army museums sector which tell stories with a wide range of interest - women's rights, immigration, community development etc.

In addition, we now have a best practice tool-kit specifically targeted at the sector which supports the engagement with orphaned and at-risk collections and dealing with collections which contain fire-arms.

4. Army Archive Development Programme

a) Archives Case Studies

The aim of this project strand was to develop a programme of support for army archives which will help the wider membership better understand the archives they have, and to work with a number of

museums to highlight the best practice around management, and conservation of their archives. This project strand aimed to help better understand the army archives in existence, and how AMOT and key partners can support the sector by developing relevant best practice case studies.

Instead of just focusing on two Archive Case studies we decided to develop a number of smaller Case Studies and use the Archive Accreditation Framework to inform the studies developed. The areas of best practice the case studies were based around were:

- organisational health – mission/governance/planning/resources

- collections – management/development/care & conservation/digitisation

- stakeholders – plans/policies & procedures/activities

As with other project strands this was promoted to all the members to get involved, and a small survey sent to those interested to ascertain their area of archive best practice. The participating museums were then visited to produce the individual Case Studies.

What was clear from the visits to all the Museums was how open and willing they were to sharing their knowledge, expertise, and best practice with other AMOT members. Some of the issues around being able to do this prior to this programme were time, resource and how they could practically share this information with others. What was also clear from this project strand was how much all the Museums relied on their volunteers to enable them to do the work they needed to do. All the participating Museums on this project strand had a very small team of paid staff. There were also conversations around how important Governance within the Museums was, so links provided to the Governance programme so support could be provided in this area too.

The work on the Case Studies highlighted a range of other issues, challenges and opportunities from the Museums too including:

- issues around Museums dependent on the MOD for their service contracts, and the impact of the collapse of Carillion on some of the operational needs of the Museums
- the need to recognise on a strategic level that volunteer support within the AMOT membership is essential to current ongoing operation of the majority of the Museums, and that this profile needs to change if the Sector is to become more resilient in the future
- the 'Into the Future' project has enabled the members to better communicate, collaborate, and share knowledge, experience and best practice amongst each other, and should be embedded into future AMOT support

- having AMOT as a more 'visible' support body for the Sector has been a huge benefit to all members
- though all recognised the need to develop more robust future plans for their museums very few had addressed long term sustainability and business continuity due to a number of resource, capacity, and skills issues

This project strand has not only produced seven 'best practice' case studies on army museum archives, but it has also provided the project team and those participating museums with a better understanding of the work AMOT does in supporting the sector, an opportunity to connect with other army museums and the wider sector, as well as connections with a range of other infrastructure support agencies and networks across public, business and third sector.

b) Volunteering in Archives

The purpose of the Volunteering strand in the 'Into the Future' programme was to establish a ladder of support and progression for those volunteering within the army museum sector. It aimed to establish the key skills and training support necessary at induction stage, and the various opportunities for further training and support dependent on museum type and volunteer specialism. It also signposted volunteers to opportunities for career progression within the sector should they wish, or just to encourage general upskilling as a volunteer. In addition to this support the project also developed a good practice toolkit to support army archives, the development of staff and volunteers, and a clear pathway to support good practice in the field. The toolkit that has been developed has drawn not only from information already available around volunteering within army museums, but also from broader good practice in volunteering, to encourage a wider understanding about good volunteer management from the sister sectors of arts, culture and heritage. Like other strands within this programme this project has only begun to uncover some of the issues, challenges and opportunities around the volunteer journey within army museums and what the push and pull factors are for volunteering. The support provided to museums has mainly included advising them on specific museum policies (Volunteering, Diversity, Volunteer Agreements), updating and improving them and source specific information around good practice and inclusive volunteering programmes. Information has been specifically tailored around the needs of each museum but there was a common ask throughout; they all wanted help around encouraging diversity. There is insufficient information available about why people volunteer and their changing motivations, and the army museums sector need more detailed support with thinking about how and where they recruit and this needs to go beyond delivering the functions of the museum. Another key area

identified was that the army museums social media and websites are not working hard enough for them, but could be used by volunteers to share their experiences and tell stories, in order to attract new volunteers, as well as get audiences excited about new activities and exhibitions.

What was apparent from this work was that there is a tendency to rely on the same teams of volunteers, particularly older and retired people, because they have a history with and loyalty to the museum or their fellow volunteers. Any organisation that is risk averse and reluctant to embrace change will stick with what's tried and tested, however they need to be encouraged to see the benefits of changing culture and practice around volunteering. Support and leadership is lacking in this area. The curators, education officers, archivists, etc who manage volunteers well articulate the value that their volunteers bring to their museum through enhancing the visitor experience but they have limited influence to strategically affect the direction of travel of their museum. They do not have influence to commit financial resources to volunteering. Volunteering is a route to getting things done in the museum, it is not understood as a strategic intervention.

Volunteers assist with range of tasks and roles – everything from archiving and cataloguing to front of house (including café and merchandise) visitor experience, tour guides, schools and outreach. Owing to limited staff capacity to manage large teams of volunteers (anything above 7 or 8 starts to become challenging), museums engage volunteers at operational level.

Even the more established army museums with very experienced volunteer managers, are working with extremely limited capacity. Some museums cannot grow the number of their volunteers as they have limited staff resource to manage them.

Some of the issues and challenges encountered on the strand include:

- Staff capacity to recruit and manage volunteers currently curtails the vision for and growth of volunteer programmes. Support with looking at how more experienced volunteers can be trained to recruit and manage other volunteers is a possible solution.
- Lack of diversity in army museums – two of the five army museums said they wanted to recruit a more diverse volunteer network, but again were restricted with resource limitations
- Re-thinking traditional volunteer roles – this is a whole project in itself to support army museums to consider the role of technology and how it can be used to better deliver their services and engage with new audiences.

What has clearly emerged is that museums need basic structured support with their volunteering programmes. Whilst this work has begun to look at how participating museums can better recruit people through a recognised volunteer pathway to encourage more involvement around management and care of collections and archives, and helping to develop additional skills we recognise that there is still a considerable amount of detailed work and support that is required around supporting volunteers and volunteering that we have not been able to develop further. We have

though been able to provide specific one to one guidance to participating museums and a useful toolkit that will provide AMOT members useful information and best practice around diversity, safeguarding, and GDPR to help strengthen their volunteering offer.

5. Economies of Scale Programme

The aim of this strand was to consider the potential for army museums to work more collaboratively and collegiately to increase cost efficiencies on a wide range of products and services within their museums. To use the information from the report to inform the development of a practical plan of development and action for a cost efficiency programme for army museums.

The background work undertaken on this project strand highlighted the numerous schemes, programmes, and brokers there are already throughout the UK providing a range of opportunities for public, private, and third sector organisations to benefit from service and product discounts within the generic third, public, and business sector, as well as the limited opportunities available within the museums and heritage sector. It has also identified the different ways that these programmes have been set up, whether through existing brokers, or as independent trading arms (to provide additional income). What is clear from the initial background research, is that in order for a bulk purchase scheme to succeed there needs to be a substantial number of interested organisations involved so that the negotiations with the suppliers delivers the appropriate discounts to members, there needs to be a robust infrastructure within the managing organisation to administer, recruit, and manage both the suppliers and procurers of the service, and also robust legal and financial frameworks to ensure that the offer to both suppliers and procurers minimises legal risk and maximises financial viability to ensure longevity.

What was clear amongst the army museums was the limited number of members who communicated or collaborated regarding services and products to help reduce costs, and that very few were already engaged with existing cost efficiency schemes. Other issues within the sector include current limitations for approximately one third of the AMOT membership as they are already financially supported via the MOD – either because their Museum is based in MOD buildings on MOD land, or indeed they are part of an MOD soft facilities service contract which pays for a number of different products and services they use. This is due to reduce over the next 3-5 years, and thus will massively impact on those museums reliant on this additional financial support. As such this work is essential now more than ever to provide AMOT with an opportunity to help members reduce costs across a wide range of their services and products.

Because of the initial background research undertaken AMOT has now developed a Pilot relationship with a long established social enterprise called the Charities Buying Group who were set up in 2002 and now have over 10,000 members from 9,000 charities with buying agreements with 53 major suppliers and increasing. The aim of this partnership is to look to run a Pilot Cost Efficiency Scheme with 10 army museums free of charge to identify if and what cost savings can be made in a controlled scheme. The results of this Pilot will then be disseminated with the rest of the membership with a view to developing a long-term relationship to support the sector. Initially targeting general goods and services, with a view to developing cost savings on museum specific services and products at a later date. In addition to this, there is also the opportunity to look at AMOT working collaboratively with several individuals and organisations to provide a 'hub' of core organisational support services to members e.g. HR support, Legal support, Financial management, and museum specific support etc…..

Conclusions

Delivering a £300k programme of Resilience Support to a Sector new to this level of Capacity Building, Organisational Change, Training, and Engagement is usually done over at least 3years not 11 months. Thus, the commitment and delivery achievements of the 'Into the Future' Team and the Sector are little short of miraculous over 11 months highlighting how important, essential, and much overdue this programme has been. Running such an intensive and complex programme of support with part time project management (in total 3 days per week) has also been a challenge not to be replicated. This type of project requires full time project management support as well as operational delivery support, and again highlights the level of commitment and dedication from the 'Into the Future' Team. Considering AMOT is a run by one member of staff, this was a monumental undertaking of activity in very short-space of time. AMOT itself needing to undergo a significant amount of organisational change in order to support the delivery of the project.

In addition to the outcomes and outputs outlined below, the project has delivered the following:

- Long-term partnerships in place with strategic bodies such as the National Archives, The National Army Museum, the National Council For voluntary Organisation, Charities Buying Group, and Architectural Heritage Fund to name but a few……
- An organisational change paper which is already being adopted by the AMOT trustees which increases AMOT's core activity team permanently
- An increased interest and activity from those working in the profession at all levels in AMOT's work and the best practice advice and guidance it now provides
- An increased "buzz" within the sector and interest to engage with its sector support organisation

- The 'Into the future' programme has raised the profile of AMOT and increased awareness amongst members about the benefits of engaging with the charity through both traditional, digital and social communication channels
- A raised awareness about AMOT and the work it does supporting the army museums sector from the wider business, public, and third sector – especially those partners outside of the cultural, museum, and heritage sector

Achieved objectives and outcomes

ACE Goal 1: Excellence is thriving in the arts, museums and libraries

Planned Outcomes and Outputs	Unplanned Outcomes and Outputs	Quantifiable Outputs	Wider Benefits
Delivery of a collections scoping research project, resulting tool-kit and recommendations to support at-risk collections	Difficulty in ensuring the sector responded to the survey, actually engaged greater comms and understanding of sector needs	1 orphaned collections report 3 tool kits to support orphaned, at-risk collections and firearm collections Associated best practice templates to support collections care and management	Understanding of the key issues and opportunities facing the army collections Understanding of the key objects and archives and the stories they tell Longer-term ability to assess issues when collections become at-risk and which key objects and archives need protecting

ACE Goal 3: The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable

Planned Outcomes and Outputs	Unplanned Outcomes and Outputs	Quantifiable Outputs	Wider Benefits
Delivered a range of regional network projects and programmes to support the ongoing sustainability of these newly formed support structures	We now have a number of best practice case studies which can be shared across the networks including group conservation, temporary exhibitions, and working with challenging histories.	6 network projects delivered for over 20 army museums Delivery of 4 best practice case studies	Strong structures in place to support localised activity and provide support on the ground.

AMOT
MARCH 2018

	Bi annual meetings between AMOT, NAM and network leads to support a triangulation approach to understanding the needs of the sector and putting support in place.	Delivery of 2 regional network meetings	Better awareness of the sector and ability of the sector to inform high-level support
Delivered 2 key events aiming to create a more collaborative approach to networking, skills share, and knowledge exchange	Ability to engage new and different audiences to high-level sector events Support form external organisations to engage the sector in wider activity such as fund-raising, social media, and education provision AMOT plan to use the format developed ongoing to increase sector engagement Use of the programme to deliver AMOT grant surgeries and support information at the events for the first time to increase applications to the grant programme	2 national events delivered in London and Manchester for over 200 delegates A threefold increase in applications to AMOT grants programme and an uplift to those grants to £5K per application. Many of these applicants had not engaged with AMOT before or for a long time	The sector is skilled in understanding new partnerships and opportunities available to them The sector has an annual event that supports two-way discussion and information share An increased understanding of applying for funding and where to find relevant funding A better understanding within the Sector about funding and income diversification, and better links to those funders, investors, and commissioners through support and information provided by AMOT
Delivery of an Economies of Scale research project resulting in a Pilot programme developed in partnership with Charities Buying Group for 10 AMOT members to look at cost efficiencies. The result of the Pilot informing potential 'roll-out' of a cost efficiencies scheme for AMOT members	Highlighted the lack of opportunities available for the sector to engage with established programmes around cost efficiencies Highlighted the need for the sector to engage in a collaborative way with each other around cost efficiencies – for example using the regional network structures. Highlighted the need for those MOD supported Museums to begin engaging with cost efficiency programmes as the future	A background research report Development of a Pilot Project in partnership with the Charities Buying Group Potential opportunity to develop a 'back room' service offer through AMOT membership	A better understanding within the Sector about funding and income diversification, and better links to those funders, investors, and commissioners through support and information provided by AMOT Better communication with each other through the Regional Network structures to inform and engage Better engagement with the wider third sector infrastructure support

	reduction in financial support will impact on their bottom line		agencies that can assist with cost efficiencies, and support
Better relationships with existing partners and stakeholders as a result of collaborative work undertaken during this project			An increased interest and activity from those working in the profession at all levels about AMOT's work and the best practice advice and guidance it now provides Opportunities to develop sponsorship and fund-raising through organisations such as the Architectural Heritage Fund and HLF

ACE Goal 4: The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled

Planned Outcomes and Outputs	Unplanned Outcomes and Outputs	Quantifiable Outputs	Wider Benefits
Delivery of a governance change programme with associated tools, tips, and templates to help AMOT members around Good Governance	A cluster of museums in Yorkshire wished to work together on what joint governance may look like Highlighted how Governance change programmes need to be developed over a longer period of time Highlighted some of the historical issues the museums have with their Board diversity, frequency of meetings, and ability to engage with a short term project Highlighted on a national level the potential opportunity to work collaboratively with the Charity Commission and other infrastructure	Army museums supported through a bespoke governance change programme Governance change tool-kit developed to complement the support programme with useful Top Tips and Templates, and guidance the sector can use	The leadership and workforce of army museums are better prepared and more diverse The sector has a greater understanding about good governance and the roles and responsibilities of their board members AMOT is able to work collaboratively with the Charity Commission and other infrastructure support agencies to support the wider membership

	support agencies to review existing governance structures AMOT plans to use the work undertaken with this project to inform a more comprehensive programme of support around Governance Change with the sector		
Delivery of a Volunteering support project for 8 Museums with a supporting toolkit to support other AMOT members	Ability to work with the NCVO on this programme has enabled AMOT to develop a more structured long-term relationship on a variety of areas	Delivery of a tool kit to support volunteering in army museums	Partnership development with the NDVO which will support the sector in the longer term Roll out of the tool-kit by AMOT in 2018 will ensure a greater awareness of the role and value of volunteers and how to best support and engage them