



Supported using public funding by

**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**

Resilience Syndicate Project Evaluation Summary



RESILIENCE
SYNDICATE PROJECT



CULTURE
SYNDICATES

March 2018

The Project

According to the Museums Association, 'interning' and volunteering to gain work experience is endemic in the museums and galleries sector. The fact that in many instances, this experience has been gained through contacts, without a structured approach to the gaining of skills, knowledge and relevant experience, has brought criticisms. The Resilience Syndicate project was conceived as a counter to this, both to assist sector entrants to gain heritage sector skills but also importantly to support local museums to become more resilient in today's challenging economic climate.

The project is a £149,189 Arts Council England funded project which has been run by Culture Syndicates to support six internships across the East Midlands. The project's objective was to employ these interns for twelve months, increase their individual knowledge of working within the sector, develop an understanding of how to create resilient museums by building in best practice and empower them through the use of co-production in their work.

Six partner museums in the East Midlands were involved and the project combined typical museum placement experience and work experience within the Culture Syndicates consultancy model. The museums involved were :-

- Ayscough Hall Museum – Spalding, Lincolnshire
- Bassetlaw Museum – Retford, Nottinghamshire
- Manor House Museum – Kettering, Northamptonshire
- Mansfield Museum – Mansfield, Nottinghamshire
- Museum of Timekeeping, British Horological Institute – Upton, Nottinghamshire
- Rutland County Museum – Oakham, Leicestershire

The project commenced in the autumn of 2016 and the interns were employed by Culture Syndicates, initially for 4 days a week, on a salary of £13,650 pro rata. The project included three modules:-

- Audience Development
- Interpretation and Engagement
- Touring Consortium which developed into a Temporary Exhibition as the Legacy element of the project.

Interns worked on the above modules in addition to individual projects at their placement museums. As a number of the interns gained roles before the end of their scheduled placement, guided by the project's Advisory Panel budget was re-allocated to fund small projects in the participating museums to continue the project's objectives. The legacy element of this project is a temporary exhibition which uses digital transfer and after piloting in the East Midlands, it is being shown in the South West in Spring 2018.

An evaluation was carried out using monitoring information provided to the Arts Council England, feedback collected through stakeholder surveys and primary research with those stakeholders. Good practice from other entry routes to the sector was also examined which provides some useful ideas on project structure and delivery.

Key Findings

All parties involved in the project identified detailed learning points which have been included in this evaluation. These can be clearly applied to both general working practices and specifically the design and delivery of employability and workforce development programmes in the future.

For the interns:-

- Most benefit was gained from the time spent in their museum placement and feedback focused on ways to ensure that this was a greater proportion of future programmes.
- All felt that they had gained significantly from a broad range of training and networking opportunities.
- The internship provided transferable skills.
- Support from the museums was excellent, particularly the pastoral support.
- Peer to peer training worked well and visiting other interns on placement.
- All would choose to do an internship again and would encourage others to look for this route into the sector.

For the museums:-

- All museum managers were very positive about how useful the interns had been during their placement – described variously as ‘invaluable’, ‘high quality’ and ‘incredibly useful’.
- In a number of instances, the hosting an intern enabled the museum to carry out specific projects such as pop-up museums, working through documentation and cataloguing back logs, gallery redevelopment, outreach activities with the local community.
- The introduction of social media expertise and capacity was greatly appreciated.
- Generally the museum managers felt that the time split would have been better if there had been more time spent with them which would have further reinforced being part of the team and work on specific projects.
- All of the museums acknowledged very positively the financial administration of the project by Culture Syndicates and the resulting reduction in administration for each participating museum.

Conclusions

Although this has been a relatively small scale project in comparison with other heritage sector employability programmes, the Resilience Syndicate project has been a significant success for all stakeholders involved. These successes include:-

- All interns secured jobs in the sector and remain in employment - very few employability programmes can claim to have a 100% success rate and for these roles to be sustained. In all instances, the now former interns are taking the technical, professional and organisational skills gained through the project and applying them.

- For Culture Syndicates, leading this project has enabled them to grow as a specialist organisation and to demonstrate the ability to design and deliver an employability programme specifically for the heritage sector.
- For the East Midlands based museums involved, all commented very favourably on the injection of capacity and fresh ideas that hosting an intern brought them. Furthermore, the development of the various projects by the interns and the subsequent delivery of mini- projects has allowed the museums to address longstanding issues or to connect with new audiences – all very much part of developing resilience.

The value of networks developed through this project is also significant - for the interns in terms of establishing fledgling career networks; the members of the project's Advisory Panel in terms of informing and shaping the sector and for the partner museums, who all commented on the positive benefits of working more closely with other professionals in the region to share practice.

In all cases, notwithstanding the day to day resource challenges, the view from the museum managers involved was firmly that they would host an intern again - *'a winning project all round'*.

It is hoped that the innovative ideas and good practice gained from the Resilience Syndicate project can be built on in the future and that funders will look favourably on applications that supports positive direction of travel.

