

Mapping Museum Data in
England

Arts Council England

Final Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Aims and Approach

In May 2017, Arts Council England commissioned DC Research Ltd to carry out a scoping study entitled '**Mapping of Museum Data in England**'. The aims of the study were to:

- Understand **what data is currently collected**.
- Understand **issues and perspectives on the data**.
- Identify examples of **good practice**.

The remit included making recommendations to Arts Council England about: the most **viable and effective method(s) for collecting** data from museums; the **types of data** museums should be collecting; how Arts Council should **manage and share museum data** in the future.

Current Data Collection and Provision

First, it is commonly acknowledged that there is already a **substantial amount of data about museums already being collected at the current time**. Within this, a number of consultees highlighted the amount of data museums provide to Arts Council England.

Second, within the data provided, a **common theme concerns the level of overlap** – with museums reporting that they are asked similar questions, and for the same/similar data, in various ways from a range of organisations.

This leads to **frustration within the sector** about being asked multiple times for the same/similar data. Given the range of data collected, and the issues highlighted, the challenge is to assess the extent to which museum data and data processes can be better aligned and improved for the benefit of individual museums and sector-wide organisations.

Data Capacity, Capability and Confidence

Findings from the survey on various aspects of data capacity and capability show that just over half (**56%**) report **data collection capacity as good**, and less than half (**46%**) report **data analysis capacity as good**.

In contrast, almost **80%** report **data collection capability as good**, with **two-thirds reporting data analysis capability as good** and more than **70%** reporting **confidence to use data intelligently as good**.

These results clearly demonstrate a perception that **capacity is the far greater issue than capability or confidence** when it comes to data.

OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON MUSEUM DATA

Scoping the Options

Accepting that there is a need to better gather and present key museum data to support the range of purposes and uses of data, there are two main options that can be considered:

- **Working with what already exists** – by attempting to bring together the existing patchwork of data collection practices to provide an overview of the museum sector across a range of key data.
- **Create something new** – by developing a new process (which would align and also replace some of the existing processes) that would provide a more consistent and comprehensive overview of the museum sector across a range of key data.

The aim of either option is to create a process by which current, consistent, reliable, and ideally longitudinal data is collected on a comprehensive basis from all museums in England. This will support museums, Arts Council England, and a range of other sector organisations across the full range of purposes and uses of data.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ARTS COUNCIL ENGLAND

Viable and effective methods for collecting data

Based on the preferred option being the creation of a new data collection process – and for it to be an annual, 'light touch', data collection exercise that all Accredited museums across England are required to take part in, it is recommended that:

- Such a data collection exercise is carried out using an **online** approach.
- Whilst this could either be via an online survey or via Arts Council's current online systems/portals, the **preference is for the use of an online portal where museums can self-manage the information in their own account**. This is a more efficient approach, allowing museums to update information about themselves (effectively a '**user profile**') rather than having to provide the same information on more than one occasion.
- The data collection process should be '**light touch**' and as **straightforward** as possible for museums to complete. Providing **clarity on the purpose** for each aspect of data required (in terms of 'what, why and how') will be important. This will help ensure only data that will be used for a clear purpose is collected.
- **Guidance** should be offered about both how to collect the data asked for, and how to provide the data via the online approach adopted. This may involve offering guidance and **support to museums**, especially those for whom there are data capacity issues. Such guidance should be published well in advance of the implementation of any data collection processes to allow museums sufficient time to collect the data.

Types of data museums should be collecting

The types of data museums should be collecting via this new approach are set out in the main report. This reflects the core data most commonly used by museums, the common data required by museum sector organisations for a variety of purposes, and the data most commonly reported by museums as having issues around overlaps and duplications.

It is intended to be a manageable, straightforward list of data that it will be possible for all Accredited museums, irrespective of their size or scale or data capacity and capability, to provide.

How Arts Council should manage and share museum data in the future

- Arts Council England should take the lead in establishing this data collection process.
- Arts Council England should ensure, and articulate clearly to museums, the purposes of collecting the types of data and how they will be used.
- Arts Council England should provide a 'state of the sector' summary on an annual basis drawing on this data.
- Arts Council England should make the data collected available as (anonymised) open source data in a format that is usable by museums for benchmarking purposes.
- Arts Council England should ensure that data sharing agreements and protocols are in place with Museum Development providers and SSOs (in the first instance, and other museum funders, e.g. HLF, beyond this) to allow sharing data with these organisations and thereby reducing the need for this data to be collected by other means.
- Arts Council England should systematise the links between the Accreditation and investment datasets it holds. It is understood that such systematisation is achievable, albeit would require time and resources to be dedicated to such a task. Due consideration will also need to be given to the findings of the Accreditation review and any implications of this on such processes.
- Arts Council England should explore the extent to which data from the regional Museum Development surveys could be brought together into one dataset, and ensure that the appropriate permissions and data sharing protocols are in place for this to be achieved.

1. INTRODUCTION

In May 2017, Arts Council England (ACE) commissioned DC Research Ltd to carry out a scoping study entitled '**Mapping of Museum Data in England**'.

The scoping study aimed to increase Arts Council England's understanding of current data collection practice in the museum sector. The research included both the mapping of existing data collection, as well as identifying issues with data collection and making recommendations for future data collection and indicators.

The study has taken place during the time-period of the DCMS Museums Review but has been completed prior to its publication. The issues and challenges around the provision of data for the Museums Review by Arts Council England and others has been an underpinning factor in the commissioning of this study.

Aims of Study

The three main aims of the study were to:

- Understand **what data is currently collected** (e.g. what is collected; how it is collected; who it is for; how it is used).
- Understand **issues and perspectives on the data** (e.g. usefulness of the data; data capture, collection and analysis issues; data gaps; data ownership; data sharing).
- Identify examples of **good practice** (relating to data collection, management and sharing).

The remit of the study also included making recommendations to Arts Council England about:

- The most **viable and effective method(s) for collecting** data from museums.
- The **types of data** museums should be collecting.
- How Arts Council should **manage and share museum data** in the future.

The scoping study will be used to inform a future project focussing on indicators of resilience within the museum sector, the light touch review of the Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the UK and the Museum Development programme for 2018-22.

Structure of Report

This document is the Final Report for the scoping study (produced in September 2017) and is structured as follows:

- The remainder of this section (**Section 1**) provides a summary of the approach and method used for the study.
- **Section 2** looks at the current position/landscape on museum data and considers what data is currently collected, drawing on the findings from the survey of museums, the one-to-one consultations and the group discussions.
- **Section 3** summarises a range of the issues and perspectives on the current position/landscape on museum data, drawing on the findings from the one-to-one consultations, the group discussions and the survey of museums.

- **Section 4** reflects on the findings from Sections 2 and 3 and looks at the options for museum data going forward, setting out the issues to consider and presenting recommendations for Arts Council based on the findings of this study.
- **Annex 1** provides a list of the individuals that were consulted as part of the scoping study, as well as details about the group discussions that have taken place.
- **Annex 2** presents the main findings from the survey of the museum sector that was carried out as part of the scoping study.

Approach and Method/Summary of Tasks

Given the scoping study remit for this research, much of the work involved consultations and discussions with a wide range of individuals working within the museum sector – both individually and collectively – as well as a survey of museums. These consultations were supported by a range of desk based research tasks.

In summary, the main tasks carried out for this study were as follows:

- **Inception and Interim Meetings** – An Inception Meeting was held in May 2017 between representatives from Arts Council England and DC Research. Ongoing progress was communicated by email and telephone discussions throughout the study. An Interim Meeting where the emerging findings from the study were presented and discussed took place in July 2017.
- **Qualitative Interviews** – One-to-one, face-to-face consultations took place with a range of representatives from organisations and agencies in the museum sector across England. In total **28 individuals were consulted** (a list of consultees is included in Annex 1 to this report). These discussions covered a range of topics relating to the specific aims of the study.
- In addition, **four group discussions** took place during June and July 2017. These discussions covered the same issues as those considered in the qualitative interviews, but in a group setting. The group discussions took place as part of the following meetings: Museum Development Network Meeting; Major Partner Museum Meeting; Arts Council England Museums Team Meeting; and the Cross-sector Museums Meeting.
- **Light Touch Museum Sector Survey** – To ensure that museums had the opportunity to feed in their views about current data collection practice, and their issues and perspectives on various aspects surrounding this, a light touch, online survey was developed. The survey took place during August 2017 and **received more than 200 responses, which reduced to 150 when the responses were cleaned** and insufficiently complete responses and duplicates were removed. The results from the survey are included in Annex 2, and are also used throughout Sections 2 and 3 of this report. The response level is regarded as sufficient for the purposes of this research, and is good for a survey of this type taking place in August. The responses represent around one-tenth of Accredited Museums in England, and include responses from across the country, as well as a mix of museum size and type of museum (See Annex 2 for more details).
- **Desk Based Research** – To support the various aspects of primary research (i.e. qualitative interviews and group discussions as well as the survey) a range of desk based research tasks also occurred throughout the study.

2. CURRENT POSITION ON MUSEUM DATA

This section of the report looks at the current position/landscape on museum data and considers what data is currently collected, drawing on the findings from the survey of museums, the one-to-one consultations and the group discussions as well as the supporting desk research.

Overarching Considerations

Before summarising the current position on museum data, some of the overarching considerations around museum data and the remit of this scoping study are set out – this reflects the issues raised by consultees during the qualitative interviews and also by survey respondents in relation to the aims of this research.

Reflections from consultees initially highlighted the scale of the scope of the study – with consultees summarising the issue noting that ‘it is a big question to ask’ and that seeking to cover all museum data is a challenge.

Therefore, a number of overarching themes and principles emerged from the interviews, and these were supported by the feedback received within the open-ended questions in the survey.

First, interviewees and survey respondents **strongly emphasised how important it is to be clear about the uses and purposes of collecting museum data.**

Common facets of this include being clear about:

- **What it will be used for?**
- **Why it is needed?**
- **How it will be used?**

For many consultees, this needs to be the starting point of any development of, or change in, the collection of data from museums by ACE and by other organisations and agencies. **Being able to understand and articulate to museums why the data is needed, what it will be used for, and how it will be used is regarded as an essential aspect by many consultees.** It is the lack, or perceived lack, of this at the moment that causes many frustrations for museums, an issue highlighted in the survey and in individual consultations.

"...the Agency collecting the data needs to better understand why is doing this. Is it to build audiences, run museums more effectively, define and recognise growth and development challenges? All three? More?"

"Need to clarify what the purpose is."

"What is the data being collected for? I think this is a massive issue...If museums are being asked to provide even more data on stretched budgets and over-worked staff, I think there needs to be a clear outline from the start about why, how it will support them, and how the data will be used to benefit them and the sector in the short, medium and long-term."

"At the moment, a lot of data is collected which isn't put to effective use. That needs to change."

"Data collection for the sake of it is a waste of time."

"I think there needs to be better definition of what data needs to be collected and how it can be used to help develop the museum offer and its business. This also means that we need clarity on what data we do not need to collect, so that effort and resource can be concentrated."

Second, it is also important to acknowledge that whilst many consultees understand and accept the rationale for this scoping study and for ACE seeking to address the issues around museum data, there were also questions raised by some consultees about the importance of data issues relative to other issues for museums at the current time, some of which challenged the importance of this area of work.

For example, some consultees asked questions on, or raised challenges about:

- (i) whether a focus on data was a current priority (compared to other potential areas of activity);
- (ii) whether addressing any issues with museum data is worth investing in – assuming that some level of investment will be required to progress and improve it, is this worth doing compared to other things;
- (iii) whether the focus on data at this time it is a 'knee jerk' reaction to data gaps; and
- (iv) what could be done that currently cannot due to a lack of data.

Such challenges are important to reflect on, especially when the issues around potential options about future data collection practice are set out in Section 4 of this report.

Purposes and Uses of Data

Building on the issues highlighted above about the importance of articulating the 'what, why, and how' around data collection, consultees reflected on what they regard as the main purposes and uses of collecting museum data. The purposes are many and varied, but some common issues did emerge, and are set out below. Any such categorisation is, by its nature, a simplification of the wide range of purposes and uses of data, but it does reflect the common themes from the consultations.

- **Advocacy** was highlighted as a key purpose of museum data. This includes advocacy for the whole museum sector at the national level, but also advocacy for individual museums or for groups (geographic and thematic groups) of museums.
- In addition to national advocacy, the purpose of museum data in helping to inform national **policy-making** was highlighted. Once again, using museum data to inform policy-making also occurs at the sub-national level.
- The role of data in supporting **ACE in its role as the national development agency for museums** was emphasised, as well as the use of data in supporting ACE's role as a **distributor of public funding to the museum sector**.
- Beyond ACE specifically, the use of data by **cross-sector museum organisations** to help inform and influence the **support offered/provided to the sector** by such agencies and organisations was highlighted as an important purpose for data.
- Within these particular aspects, the ability to be able to assess trends over time by having consistent, longitudinal data was emphasised as important.
- The use of data by museums themselves was also highlighted as a key purpose – specifically, and most commonly, in relation to informing and supporting individual **museums in their own organisational/business development** as well as in being able to **benchmark themselves against relevant comparators** in a variety of ways.

It is important in considering this list of the various purposes and uses of museum data to acknowledge that, as noted by many consultees, **not all of these aspects are equal in terms of the level of priority given to them by individual museums and by the various organisations and agencies working in the museum sector.** There are different priorities, data needs (in terms of data required for each of these aspects), and different perspectives from consultees on the extent to which data currently underpins and supports these purposes at the moment.

It is important for these differences to be recognised, and balanced with the fact that some core data will help to satisfy more than one of these uses/purposes. In addition, some of the purposes will require current (up to date), consistent, regular data (e.g. those relating to operational aspects for museums) whilst others are able to rely on less frequent, snapshots of data (e.g. advocacy).

The survey asked museums about a range of broad types of data (participation (visitor/audience), workforce, income and expenditure, collections, learning, digital profile, and local area) and the reasons why they collect such types of data. These results give an indication about the main uses and purposes of these various data from the perspective of individual museums.

Table 2.1 below summarises the results¹ by reasons for collecting the data, irrespective of the type of data being considered, whilst Table 2.2 later in this section sets out the results in detail.

The summary results in Table 2.1 show that the **most common reasons** offered by museums for collecting these types of data is for the **museum's own advocacy (95%)** followed by the **museum's own business development (89%)** and to **inform programming and exhibitions (83%)**.

The next two reasons are due to external influences – with 81% reporting they collect some of these types of data as it is a requirement for Accreditation, and 65% reporting they do so as it is a legal requirement to do so.

The lowest ranked response related to supporting advocacy of the wider museum sector – with just over half (54%) identifying this as a reason.

Table 2.1: Please complete the question below, identifying which broad types of data your museum collects, and the reasons why you collect each of these types of data. (Tick all that apply):

	Total	Percent
For our own advocacy	97	95.1%
For our own business development	91	89.2%
To inform our own programming and exhibitions	85	83.3%
Required for Accreditation	83	81.4%
Legal requirement to do so	66	64.7%
Requested by funder	62	60.8%
For benchmarking ourselves against others	61	59.8%
To support advocacy of the wider museum sector	55	53.9%

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 102)

¹ These results are for those museums that replied to the survey who are not Major Partner Museums (MPMs). MPMs were asked a different question in the survey to reflect the different data reporting requirements to ACE that MPMs have.

Current Data Collection and Provision

There are a wide range of current approaches that involve the collection of data from museums. Beyond collecting data for their own purposes, which Table 2.1 highlighted as the key reasons for collecting data by museums, the next most common was as a requirement for Accreditation.

In addition to the Accreditation Scheme process being highlighted by museums in this regard, it is also mentioned more generally by museums and sector interviewees as one of the key routes through which museums are required to provide a substantial amount of data and information.

As such, the Accreditation Scheme acts as a data capture device currently for the museums sector. However, it is currently designed to capture, collect and review data related to the eligibility and assessment of applicant museums for Accreditation status, and therefore has limitations in terms of the wider uses of such data for other purposes at the current time. Despite this, Accreditation is clearly a valuable mechanism for data collection from the museums sector, and is something that consultees describe as 'unique' to museums when compared to other art forms. The extent to which it can be used as a data collection mechanism for other purposes is considered later in this report (see Section 4).

It is understood that the current, ongoing 'light touch' review of Accreditation, is giving consideration to various issues around the data aspects of Accreditation – in terms of data requirements, frequency of provision of data and information, process for providing such data, etc. The review is ongoing, and will not be completed until after this scoping study is finalised. As such, this study is not able to give detailed consideration to what the future data requirements will be for Accreditation, but does consider the role and process of Accreditation in terms of more general data collection processes for the museums sector.

In addition to **Accreditation**, there are a range of other approaches that involve the collection of data from museums, including (but not limited to):

- **Arts Council England Annual Submissions** – collect data from National Portfolio Organisations and Major Partner Museums covering organisation profile, staffing, financial statements, numbers of performances, exhibition days, film screenings, educational activities (including known and estimated audiences for these activities) and data on touring activities².
- **Audience Finder** (developed by The Audience Agency) is a free national audience data and development tool, which allows cultural organisations to gather insights about their audiences by providing tools for collecting and analysing data³. There is a requirement on all MPMs from the Arts Council to use Audience Finder.
- **Regional Museum Development Programmes**, supported through funding from Arts Council England, provide a range of support services to museums through the Museum Development providers in each English region. This often includes research and data capture about the sector, with six of the regional Museum Development Programmes currently undertaking the same/similar annual data surveys/benchmarking of Accredited museums (and those officially working towards Accreditation) in their areas.
- **AIM Visitor Verdict** captures audience data around types of visitor, reasons for visiting, and other visitor patterns, as well as feedback from visitors about overall experience⁴.

² <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/annual-submissions-report>

³ <https://audiencefinder.org/>

⁴ http://www.aim-museums.co.uk/content/aim_visitor_verdict/

- **Heritage Lottery Fund** collects data about organisations both in terms of grant applications, as well as through periodic progress reports produced by successful projects, in addition to end of project reports/evaluations. However, the data gathered is for a specific purpose; either in evaluating the suitability of an organisation to receive funding, or in monitoring organisations delivery and completion of projects.
- **A range of other funders of museums** also collect data about organisations both in terms of grant applications, as well as through periodic reporting by successful projects, and end of project reports and evaluations. This can also involve regular reporting to core funders (e.g. local government, government departments, universities, and various funding bodies) as well as project funders. The extent to which museums are prescribed the types of data that need to be collected and provided, or are provided with a degree of flexibility in terms of data varies from funder to funder.
- The **Museums Association** launched their most recent sector wide survey in late 2016 to cover the 2015-16 financial year, and has been surveying the sector on an annual basis since 2011 (although previous surveys have focused on the impact of funding cuts). The approach was refreshed for 2016 to build upon and expand earlier surveys, and looks at visitor figures, governance, admission charges, funding (covering a number of different sources of income), workforce, and public-facing services.
- **Visit Britain/Visit England**, produces both UK-wide and England-specific tourism data covering volume and value, tourism business, and consumer behaviour to provide insights and statistics around the UK tourism sector⁵, which includes data on museums given the role of museums as key visitor attractions, and the role of museums and heritage as a driver for tourism. In addition, many museums take part in Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Scheme.
- The **Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA)** collects data from its members (which 'includes UK's most popular, iconic and important museums, galleries, palaces, castles, cathedrals, zoos, historic houses, heritage sites, gardens and leisure attractions'). This data is used to support ALVA's mission to represent the views and achievements of the country's foremost visitor attractions to Government, the broader tourism industry, business, media and the public. ALVA's membership includes a range of museums across the country and ALVA promotes co-operation, networking, information sharing between its members in order to continually improve the high standards of visitor management and visitor experience.
- **DCMS Sponsored Museums Performance Indicators**⁶ – DCMS collects data from the museums that it sponsors, and produced an annual report and statistical release based on this data. The data are collected by the museums through sample surveys, with the exception of educational visits and total visits which are based on actual counts.
- Other **museum organisations** also collect data from subsets of museums (which can typically be their membership) – e.g. Association of Independent Museums (AIM), Museums Association (MA) and National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC) have all carried out, and continue to carry out a range of ongoing and snapshot surveys and data collection exercises on various topics and themes.

This list covers a range of the key sources and routes through which data is collected from/provided by museums. It is worth noting that the only required aspects of this relate to Accreditation (for all Accredited museums). The rest of the routes and sources relate to specific groups/subsets of museums – e.g. by type, by funder, through specific membership/subscription etc. and as such, taken together, there is effectively a patchwork

⁵ <https://www.visitbritain.org/england-research-insights>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/sponsored-museums-annual-performance-indicators>

of data about museums currently – a theme that is revisited in Sections 3 and 4 of this report.

To look at more of the specifics in terms of current data collection and provision, the more detailed results from the survey are considered below (Table 2.2). This sets out a range of broad types of data alongside the reasons for collecting such data. Table 2.2 presents in each box the number of respondents that collect each of the various types of data, alongside the reasons they collect such data. For example, of the 97 respondents that report collecting data for their own advocacy, 90 collect Participation data for this purpose.

Table 2.2 helps to identify the most common types of data in relation to each of the purposes, and shows that:

- The **most common** type of data across all purposes are reported as **Participation** data (101 respondents), followed by **Collections** data (97 respondents), **Income and Expenditure** data (94 respondents), and **Learning** data (89 respondents).
- The least common types of data across all purposes were reported as Digital Profile data and Local Area data.
- The **most common purpose was for the museum’s own advocacy** (with Participation data the most commonly identified, followed by the other three types being used for this by around 70% or more of respondents – Income and Expenditure, Collections and Learning). This was followed by for the **museum’s own business development** (with Income and Expenditure data and Participation data the most commonly used for this purpose).

Table 2.2: Please complete the question below, identifying which broad types of data your museum collects, and the reasons why you collect each of these types of data. (Tick all that apply):

	Participation (visitor/ audience)	Workforce	Income and Expenditure	Collections	Learning	Digital Profile	Local Area	Total Respondents
For our own advocacy	90	49	76	75	71	53	49	97
To support advocacy of the wider museum sector	42	20	24	33	35	23	19	55
Requested by funder	55	30	42	30	44	21	16	62
Required for Accreditation	71	51	57	75	57	34	23	83
For our own business development	78	41	79	53	54	48	45	91
To inform our own programming and exhibitions	73	12	42	66	57	30	35	85
Legal requirement to do so	13	36	53	20	6	3	2	66
For benchmarking ourselves against others	56	27	33	34	35	26	13	61
Total Respondents	101	80	94	97	89	66	68	

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 102)

Note: The boxes coloured green indicate those with more than 60 replies. Respondents could tick all boxes that apply, therefore the total column or row is the total number of respondents to that question, but they could each tick multiple responses (and many did), so the sum of each individual column or row is far greater than the number of respondents.

Following on from this, survey respondents were also asked about some of the other common data sources and the extent to which they use them. The findings showed that:

- **Two-thirds of survey respondents (67%) reported that their museum has engaged with a Museum Development provider** (Table 2.3).
- More than half of all respondents to the question (55%) have provided data to their Museum Development provider by completing a Museum Development Survey. (Table 2.4). If those reporting 'not applicable' are excluded (as they are the respondents that have not engaged with Museum Development), the results show that **more than three quarters (78%) have provided data by completing a Museum Development Survey**.
- Looking at those respondents that have both engaged with Museum Development and provided data to their Museum Development provider, **80% reported finding it useful or beneficial to their own museum** (Table 2.5).
- **Less than one-fifth of respondents** to the question reported that their museum **uses Audience Finder** (this question was only asked on non-MPMs as MPMs have to use Audience Finder) (Table 2.6).
- **Less than one-tenth of respondents** (9%) reported that their museum **uses Visitor Verdict** (Table 2.7).

Table 2.3: Has your museum engaged with a Museum Development provider?		
	Responses	
Yes	67.0%	67
No	33.0%	33
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 100)		

Table 2.4: If Yes, have you provided data to your Museum Development provider (i.e. by completing a Museum Development survey)		
	Responses	
Yes	54.8%	51
No	16.1%	15
N/A	29.0%	27
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 93)		

Table 2.5: Was collecting/gathering this information for Museum Development useful/beneficial to your museum?		
	Responses	
Yes	41.11%	37
No	10.00%	9
N/A	48.89%	44
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 90)		

Table 2.6: Does your museum use Audience Finder?		
	Responses	
Yes	17.3%	17
No	82.7%	81
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 98)		

Table 2.7: Does your museum use Visitor Verdict?		
	Responses	
Yes	9.2%	9
No	90.8%	89
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 98)		

Reflecting on the current position on museum data, interviewees, consultees and survey respondents highlighted a number of key themes around the current landscape for museum data.

First, it is commonly acknowledged that there is already a **substantial amount of data about museums already being collected at the current time** – across the various sources highlighted earlier in this section and beyond. Within this, a number of consultees highlighted the amount of data from museums already provided to Arts Council England.

Second, within this large amount of data provided to a range of organisations and agencies, for a variety of purposes, a **common theme emerging is about the level of overlap** – with museums reporting that they are asked similar questions, and for the same, or similar data, in various ways from a range of different organisations. Survey respondents noted:

"any duplication of information collection is a poor use of time...visitor numbers, financial information..."

"Providing information to different funders can be quite time consuming, it would be helpful for funding agencies in particular to share information"

"We provide different versions of the same information - also to VisitEngland etc"

This includes occasions where **museums report they are asked for the same data from different organisations**, and also where they **are asked for (very) slightly different data from different funders and sector support organisations**. This could be in the form of slightly different definitions for various data as well as being asked to provide the same data for different timescales – e.g. financial years, calendar years, academic years, etc. Examples from the survey include:

"...we find that each organisation requires slightly different data in different formats and usually for different date ranges (i.e. calendar year and academic year). So, each time we have to start afresh with the data"

"Overlapping less of an issue than having to convert similar information into different formats across sector. For example, volunteering being measured in number of volunteers, number of hours, number of shifts or number of days depending on funder/stakeholder"

"We provide information to a range of organisations who want data covering a range of time periods e.g. calendar years, academic years, financial years etc which means the same data is presented in different ways. This includes - participations- financial- research usage- educational usage etc etc"

All of this leads to **frustration within the museum sector** about being asked multiple times for the same or similar data. Given the range of data collected, and the issues highlighted above, the challenge is to assess the extent to which museum data and/or the data processes, can be better aligned and the data collection processes improved and streamlined for the benefit of individual museums and sector-wide organisations.

The current situation is described as lacking consistency in various ways, and Section 3 explores the themes around this in more detail, looking at the issues and perspectives on current data collection practices in the museums sector.

3. PERSPECTIVES ABOUT CURRENT POSITION ON MUSEUM DATA

This section of the report summarises the range of the issues and perspectives on the current position/landscape on museum data, drawing on the findings from the one-to-one consultations, the group discussions and the survey of museums.

Building on the conclusions from Section 2, it is **acknowledged that there are issues with the current situation around museum data** and that there is room for improvement and that data collection practices could be better for museums generally.

There seems to be an acceptance that some core, basic data about the sector is not currently collected, or if it is collected, it is not shared and communicated effectively enough and that this should be addressed. However, this is balanced by those consultees that emphasise the **need to be realistic about expectations of what can be done** around data for museums.

Current 'Patchwork' and Lack of Consistency

There is a consensus that the current picture for the museum sector is one of a **lack of consistency** leading to a **'patchwork'** when it comes to data collection practices. This can manifest itself in a variety of ways.

- First, some data aspects are a requirement on museums, are collected regularly, but are only asked of specific types/sub-groups of museums (e.g. DCMS-sponsored museums are asked to report on a specific set of indicators, Major Partner Museums have certain reporting requirements to ACE (Annual NPO Submissions, the use of Audience Finder)).
- Second, other aspects are collected regularly, only asked of specific types/sub-groups of museums, but are optional (e.g. Museum Development Surveys) leading to only partial coverage (albeit, for Museum Development, with typically good/very good response levels in each of the regions where such surveys are used).
- Third, there are a range of funding-related data reporting requirements which are only asked of recipient museums at certain specific points in time, related to project delivery.
- Fourth, there are a range of data collection processes that are carried out by museums purely on a voluntary basis. This will include regular surveys of museums (e.g. member surveys by organisations such as the Museums Association and the Association of Independent Museums), as well as one-off surveys for various purposes (e.g. research studies). By their nature such data are usually partial, covering only a specific sample or subset of museums, and typically vary in theme/topic from survey to survey and therefore in the specific data collected.

In addition, there is the issue of **inconsistency** mentioned at the end of Section 2 – in terms of different definitions/measures being used, different financial years being asked in terms of reporting, and varying time lags on data (in terms of when it can be provided, and when it is asked for).

Another issue raised, particularly for those museums with a range of reporting requirements to ACE, is about the **appropriateness of some data reporting processes for museums** – for example, MPMs being required to complete NPO Annual Submissions has raised some issues about the extent to which some aspects of data being requested are suited to museums:

"Terminology and analysis that was used in the arts sector prior to 2012 does not always lend itself easily to the museums sector. For example, it is not always possible to show in the data collection form how a museum could hold an activity defined as a 'performance'...without also commissioning 'productions'. Similarly, analysing a museum's programme by capacity and average ticket yield may not be as straightforward as that of a performance venue with a clear capacity and probably a box office database."

"There should be more of a focus on data that's relevant for museum audiences and operation, it's still very biased towards ticketed performing arts organisations or visual arts organisations"

"Within the activity section of the Annual Return, the focus on 'new work' and as art/culture as a product sits uneasily in a museum context...More generally, where the annual return refers to 'the arts' it would be useful if it could be made clearer how the full range of cultural activities relates to this e.g. history, science, and museums generally."

"The current ACE annual reporting has been created for NPOs and not MPMs. As such it does not take into account museum specific activity and instead asks that we mould our data to fit the template for performing arts, whilst also not allowing us to report on some areas of activity which NPOs can report on."

In the survey, MPMs were asked about the usefulness of the various ways they provide data to Arts Council England, including but not limited to the NPO Annual Submission. The results (included in Annex 2) echoed the findings for other museums from Section 2 (Tables 2.1 and 2.2) with the areas where the data provision was most useful being around the museum's own advocacy (39% very useful), the museum's own business development purposes (31% very useful), and informing programming and exhibitions (23% very useful). The most common response for each area was 'somewhat useful'.

Perceptions and Communication about Data Provision and Data Sharing

A **common perception** from museums about data provided to ACE (through various processes, with particular mention of MPM Annual Submissions, as well as Accreditation data) is that **museums provide a substantial amount of data to ACE, but that they 'get nothing back'** in that such data is not shared back out with the museums and/or that it is not used by ACE.

"The annual survey is generally a pretty onerous task and could perhaps be slimmed down - do ACE really use all of the data that is collected?"

Given the publication of the Annual Submissions Reports and datasets⁷, this is, at least to some degree, a **misperception**. However, the fact that museums raise this issue does highlight that it is something **to be addressed going forward, in terms of communication** about how such data provided to ACE is used. This links back to the early issues set out in Section 2 about how important or **essential it is for the 'what, why and how' around data collection practices to be clearly articulated to museums**.

Building on these perceptions, there is a wider issue relating to the current **sharing of data**, with consultees noting that data that has been collected (by ACE and others) is not always shared widely. This highlights that there seems to be an issue with sharing, or getting access to, data that is already collected. Issues around **data confidentiality, commercial sensitivity** are often raised when it comes to issues and challenges around data sharing. It is important that such issues are addressed, as these can often be

⁷ <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/annual-submissions-report>

presented as obstacles or barriers, but can be straightforwardly resolved with appropriate planning and agreement.

Other issues around the sharing of data can be linked to the **data capacity and capabilities of museums** to access and use such data, as well as the understanding about the benefits of accessing and using such data and the confidence around doing so. (These issues are considered later in this section.)

For some museums, the processes around data collection and provision that they are required to go through leads to data collection practices becoming part of a regulatory process (e.g. for MPMs). Given the way such processes operate, there is a **feeling that the system is one of data compliance and regulation rather than a system that supports the intelligent use of data** for the range of purposes set out in Section 2.

Another issue highlighted by consultees is that, given the role, remit and responsibilities of ACE within these data collection practices, there needs to be an acknowledgement that ACE is not a key or core funder for many museums – with (local) government or other sources accounting for a far greater proportion of core funding for many museums. As such, **ACE's role can be peripheral for many museums in terms of investment, with Accreditation being the key direct link that many museums have with ACE.**

Data Gaps, Overlaps and Duplication

Returning to the issue of overlap and duplication highlighted in Section 2, the survey and interviews asked about the level of overlap and duplication that existed across the various data collection practices that museums take part in.

Survey respondents were asked to consider the data their museum collects and provides to other organisations for various purposes, and Table 3.1 summarises the findings, and shows that, of those that responded to this question, **two-thirds of museums report either substantial or moderate amounts of duplication** (one-fifth (20%) report substantial duplication with an additional 46% reporting moderate duplication and overlap).

Table 3.1: How much overlap/duplication is there between the data you provide for such purposes? (Please tick one only)

	Responses	
Substantial amount	20.4%	21
Moderate amount	45.6%	47
Minor amount	18.5%	19
None at all	15.5%	16
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 103)		

Following on from this, survey respondents were asked if it would be helpful if their museum only had to provide such data once and for it to be shared between such organisations.

Table 3.2: If there is some level of overlap/duplication, would it be helpful if your museum only had to provide such data once and for it to be shared between such organisations?

	Responses	
Yes	65.9%	64
No	15.5%	15
N/A - No overlap	18.6%	18
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 97)		

Table 3.2 shows that two thirds of respondents reported that it would be helpful to only have to provide the data once – and if those stating ‘not applicable’ are removed (as they do not feel there is any duplication or overlap) then **more than 80% of respondents who report some level of overlap and duplication say it would be helpful if their museum only had to provide such data once and for it to be shared between organisations.**

Many of the survey respondents provided explanations of their responses, with key themes that emerged including the following [emphasis has been added by the study team through underlining key phrases]:

The benefits of such a process, including **time-saving and efficiency**:

"A central database means as a museum solely run by volunteers we would only have to complete this information once."

"A standardised form/document with visitor numbers, demographic data etc and same for staffing would help with providing that information to a number of funders"

"If we had one data set, including quantitative and qualitative data, a range of key performance measures and insight into audiences, that we were required to generate as part of our Accreditation or to make us eligible for funding, we would do it and it would be very useful to have it."

"It is perhaps a dream, but a national data set, based on a simple, easily digitally harvested, compiled and locally interrogated, would be ideal."

"...it would quite simply save time."

"KPI information such as visitor numbers, schools usage, visitor satisfaction are provided to multiple stakeholders and funders as I am sure is the case with other Museums & Galleries. If a standardised format was available with a requirement all museums publish this information it would also facilitate benchmarking between organisations"

"no specific data in mind but if the data request was in a consistent format, it would be easier and less time consuming to report."

"Providing information to different funders can be quite time consuming, it would be helpful for funding agencies in particular to share information"

"The Accreditation process in particular seems to exist in a silo. Would be useful if ACE referred to this data, rather than needing to regenerate aspects of it again for ACE grant applications."

"...it would be good if those organisations or purposes connected to Arts Council England only asked once."

"Yes - it would streamline processes if such data was captured and application forms on online portals, for example, populated automatically"

Other recognise the **different needs of different funders**:

"Each other organisation has its own particular data requirements. For example, our local authority reporting includes a more detailed analysis of activity in our local area, beyond that required by Arts Council England. For as long as we have a mix of funders, a degree of both overlap and differentiation will be inevitable."

"I think it is more useful to tailor responses to each individual body"

"...we would still prefer to hold the reporting information ourselves and share it with funders ourselves, to give us the opportunity to verify it each time, and know who is using it and for what kind of reporting"

"Other than headline visitor numbers, we tend to provide bespoke data analysis and reports depending on the requirements of each organisation or funder."

Finally, there is also the small proportion that reported **no issues** in terms of overlaps:

"Happy to submit as data is easily found."

"Once collected it is easy to repurpose data for multiple uses"

Given the majority of responding museums report moderate or substantial overlap, as well as support for the principle of providing data once and it being shared amongst relevant organisations, museums were asked in the survey if they would be happy for data about their museum to be shared (anonymously) with the rest of the museum sector for sector analysis, advocacy, intelligence and benchmarking. Table 3.3 shows that the **overwhelming majority of respondents support this idea, with 92% of respondents stating that they would be happy for such data to be shared.**

Table 3.3: Would you be happy for data about your museum to be shared (anonymously) with the rest of the museum sector for sector analysis, advocacy, intelligence and benchmarking?

	Responses	
Yes	92.6%	100
No	7.4%	8

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 108)

Data Capacity, Capability and Confidence

Table 3.4 summarises the findings from the survey on various aspects of data capacity and capability showing that museums typically rate themselves in the middle of the range of options – with good being the most common response category for four out of the five aspects considered, and poor being the most common response category for the remaining aspect.

Table 3.4: How would you describe each of the following aspects of data capacity, capability and confidence in your museum at the current time:

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor	Non-existent	Total
Data collection capacity in your museum (i.e. the time and resources within your museum for collecting data)	5%	7%	43%	37%	6%	1%	99
Data analysis capacity in your museum (i.e. the time and resources within your museum for analysing data)	4%	6%	35%	41%	10%	3%	99
Data collection capability in your museum (i.e. the skills and ability of staff in your museum to collect data)	7%	17%	54%	20%	2%	0%	97
Data analysis capability in your museum (i.e. the skills and ability of staff in your museum to analyse and interpret data)	6%	19%	40%	27%	5%	2%	99
Confidence within your museum about using data intelligently (i.e. the level of confidence within staff to be able to use data for the benefit of the museum)	5%	19%	47%	24%	4%	1%	99

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 99)

Overall, the results show that there is more of an issue with capacity than there is with either capability or confidence. Table 3.5 takes the results from Table 3.4 and combines them into two simple categories – good (capturing the ‘excellent’, ‘very good’ and ‘good’ responses) and poor (capturing the ‘poor’, ‘very poor’ and ‘non-existent’ responses), clearly reinforcing the finding that the issue is capacity rather than capability finding quite clearly.

Table 3.5: Summary of Responses about Data Capacity, Capability and Confidence		
	‘Good’	‘Poor’
Data collection capacity in your museum (i.e. the time and resources within your museum for collecting data)	55.6%	44.5%
Data analysis capacity in your museum (i.e. the time and resources within your museum for analysing data)	45.5%	54.5%
Data collection capability in your museum (i.e. the skills and ability of staff in your museum to collect data)	78.3%	21.7%
Data analysis capability in your museum (i.e. the skills and ability of staff in your museum to analyse and interpret data)	65.7%	34.4%
Confidence within your museum about using data intelligently (i.e. the level of confidence within staff to be able to use data for the benefit of the museum)	70.8%	29.2%
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 99)		

Table 3.5 shows that **just over half (56%) report data collection capacity as good, and less than half (46%) report data analysis capacity as good.**

In contrast, **almost 80% report data collection capability as good, with two-thirds report data analysis capability as good and more than 70% reporting confidence to use data intelligently as good.**

These results clearly demonstrate that **capacity is the far greater issue than capability or confidence** when it comes to data.

The following example quotes from survey respondents and consultees, relate to the key improvements that could be made to the respondents’ own museum’s data collection, analysis and reporting.

The most commonly reported issue was about **capacity and time**:

"additional staff or volunteers to undertake collection of data"

"Having more time and staff available to collect and analyse data effectively."

"Having the time to really analyse the data collected"

"Having time to do analysis is the biggest issue, including having time to investigate the best methods of analysing and presenting the data"

"If there was more staff time devoted to data analysis and collection, this would yield better results, but staff time is at maximum capacity."

"More dedicated staff time for data analysis"

"More staff training and the funds or staff to do it"

"More time to do it."

"The major problem is lack of staff time to deal with collecting data and collating it once collected."

"Time available for analysis and report preparation"

"Time spent analysing information gathered and using the data to improve the museum's provision."

"Time to get good numbers of visitor surveys completed"

"We would need more staff / volunteer time to be able to collect and analyse data, currently we have a volunteer who collates and analyses our visitor / event surveys"

Linked to capacity, a strong theme from respondents was about **reliance on volunteers** on such issues, and therefore a need for more volunteers, especially those with particular skills to help address capacity (and capability) issues:

"As we are entirely run by volunteers this is something that we only do as necessary. We would not want to spend valuable time on data collection unless somebody volunteered to do so."

"Difficult to improve the time and resources spent on collection and analysis capacity as we depend entirely on volunteers."

"More expert volunteers"

"more trained volunteers with computer skills and a good succession policy"

"More younger volunteers"

"Need for more volunteers with appropriate skills / available time."

"need the volunteers with the appropriate skill set"

Finally, some respondents did highlight that there was a need for improvements in **capability** and **confidence** as well as capacity:

"...we could benefit from training and development in analysis of data. We are always attempting to utilise data to inform decision-making, but this will always be something which is secondary to a person's role."

"...our capacity and capability is good enough for our purposes, but we aren't as confident as we could be making programming and strategic changes in response to our data analysis."

"...we feel that we have a robust system for collecting data; however, the staff members most involved in managing this system have all taken it on in addition to their core roles. We do not have someone whose core duties include data management."

Summary of Key Issues and Perspectives

Reflecting on the findings from both Sections 2 and 3, there are a range of key issues that need to be considered when the options and recommendations are set out in Section 4. In summary, it will be important for any changes or developments in data collection practices to give due consideration to:

- The current **patchwork** of museum data – and the **gaps** and **inconsistencies** that such a patchwork creates.
- The **appropriateness** of current data collection practices **to museums** rather than other types of organisations within Arts Council England's remit.
- The current **scale of data** that is provided by museums in various ways – and the **overlaps** and **duplications** that exist within this provision.
- The perception from museums that some processes involve providing **substantial amounts of information** but getting nothing back in return.
- The importance of **communication** given the misperceptions that exist – e.g. about the **purposes** for collecting data from museums (i.e. the what, why and how) and around the extent to which data is **shared** back out with museums.
- The extent to which more could be done by Arts Council and others to share data back out with museums – and the most useful formats that this could take.
- The **feeling** from museums around data collection practices being about **regulation and compliance**, rather than about data intelligence.
- The appetite from museums to improve the current practices, moving towards **providing data once** and for it to be shared amongst relevant organisations.
- The support from museums for **anonymous data** about their museum to be **shared** with the sector for analysis, advocacy, intelligence and benchmarking.
- The reported levels of capacity, capability and confidence from museums around data – and especially the issues around **data collection and analysis capacity**.

Given the issues highlighted above, the challenge is to assess the extent to which museum data and/or the data processes, can be better aligned and the data collection processes improved and streamlined for the benefit of individual museums and sector-wide organisations. The options around this are considered in the next section of the report.

4. OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON MUSEUM DATA

This section reflects on the findings from Sections 2 and 3 and looks at the options for collecting museum data going forward, setting out the issues to consider and presenting recommendations for Arts Council based on the findings of this study.

Scoping the Options

Reflecting on the key current issues with museum data as set out in Sections 2 and 3, and accepting that there is a need to better gather and present key museum data to support the range of overarching purposes and uses of data set out earlier in this report, there are two main options that can be considered:

- **Working with what already exists** – by attempting to stitch together the existing patchwork of data collection practices to provide an overview of the museum sector across a range of key data.
- **Create something new** – by developing a new process (which would align and also replace some of the existing processes) that would provide a more consistent and comprehensive overview of the museum sector across a range of key data.

The aim of either of these options is to create a process by which current/up to date, consistent, reliable, and ideally longitudinal data⁸ is collected on a comprehensive basis from all museums in England across a range of key data. This will support museums, Arts Council England and a range of other sector organisations across the full range of purposes and uses of data as set out in Section 2 of this report.

Rather than seeking to gather data (by either option) for all museums in England, there was a clear consensus from all interviewees that there should be a **focus on collecting data from Accredited museums**. This was accepted as the most straightforward means of defining which museums should be included – with an acknowledgement that if Accreditation is not used as the indicator for inclusion, there would be no clear consensus about where the line should be drawn (i.e. which other museums should or should not be included).

The use of **Accreditation as the measure through which the museums to be included in any data collection processes should be identified** does not mean that Accreditation itself is necessarily the process by which any data should be collected – this issue is dealt with later in this section.

Each of these two options are considered below. First, consideration is given to working with what already exists and 'stitching it together', and this is followed by consideration of the creation of a new data collection process.

Option 1: Working with what already exists

In attempting to work with what already exists through current data collection practices, this **would involve bringing together some of the sources that already exist and developing a consistent data set for all Accredited museums** in England to provide coverage of a range of key data.

⁸ The ability to collect longitudinal data to enable trends to be tracked over time was identified by consultees as likely to be an especially useful outcome of any sector wide and coordinated approach.

Specifically, data sources such as Accreditation data, alongside the Annual Submission for MPMs, the Museum Development Survey, the DCMS Performance Indicators could be brought together to provide coverage of all of the different parts of the museum sector.

Such an approach would require the sharing (merging) of the relevant parts of these data sets at an appropriate level to provide coverage of the entire museum sector.

The key merit of this option, compared to setting up something new, relates to avoiding the introduction of a new data collection process/practice – both in terms of the set-up time and resources, as well as the ongoing processes that would be required, and the additional burden such a process may create for museums.

However, there are a range of challenges with this option.

- First, it **would not address the overlaps and duplications issues** highlighted earlier in this report. Given the scale of overlap/duplication reported (two-thirds of survey respondents reported substantial or moderate amounts of overlap and duplication), it would clearly be preferable if this could be addressed, at least in part.
- Second, and related to this, continuing with the current data collection practices **would not address the scale of data currently provided by museums**, which some museums regarded as substantial.
- Third, whilst this option would seek to address the gaps mentioned – by **bringing together data on DCMS-sponsored museums, alongside data on MPMs** (Annual Submissions) **and data on other Accredited museums** (Museum Development data), potentially supported by Accreditation data, this **would not be straightforward. Inconsistencies** in terms of annualization (e.g. financial years, calendar years, academic years), measurement of different data (e.g. what counts as a visit/visitor) would need to be overcome.
- Fourth, in terms of **coverage** – whilst bringing together different data sets would aim to provide wider coverage of the whole sector (by bringing together data on DCMS-sponsored museums, MPMs and museums engaging in Museum Development), this **would not provide coverage of all (Accredited) museums**.

For example, whilst the **Museum Development** survey achieves good coverage of non-national and non-MPM museums, the 'standard' survey is not used in all regions (currently 6 out of 9 regions use such a survey); not all museums that engage in Museum Development respond to the survey; and not all museums engage with Museum Development. The levels of response are good, and according to the survey for this study, two-thirds of museums have engaged with Museum Development, and around three-quarters of these have provided data by completing a Museum Development survey.

However, in order to provide coverage of all Accredited museums, the coverage of Museum Development surveys would need to be broadened to include all relevant museums. This scoping study does not consider whether this is feasible or not in terms of the capacity of Museum Development providers, but even if this was feasible, feedback from some survey respondents, exemplified by the quote below, challenges this:

"In particular, I do not want to see Museum Development Officers drowning in the need to do so much data collection, that they have reduced capacity to deliver effective support to museums."

Notwithstanding these issues, the scale of coverage of the Museum Development survey across the relevant regions does lead to the provision of a useful data set and consultees highlighted this, and see the merits and benefits of this type of data continuing to be available. The extent to which the data from each of the regional Museum Development

surveys could be brought together into one overarching data set should be explored, as this could provide good coverage of museums across the country on this dataset.

Another challenge in terms of bringing these various data sources together would be about **data sharing agreements and protocols**, and the extent to which each data owner is able to, and/or willing for, the data to be shared and used in this way. Previous issues around data sharing (e.g. for Museum Development) have suggested that this is an issue that will need to be addressed going forward – no matter which option is selected in terms of future data collection practices.

The potential use of **Accreditation data** within the 'stitching together' of this data also needs to be considered. The future of data collection practices around Accreditation is currently not clear given the ongoing review of Accreditation. However, to the extent that Accreditation data is collected for a different purpose (i.e. to assess compliance against the standards of Accreditation), that it is not collected on a regular (annual) basis, and may become even less frequent in the future (see below), there would be challenges with using such data within this option unless changes were made to how and when it is collected, how it is stored, and how integrated (or not) it is with other Arts Council data systems.

Much of the data that Arts Council England hold on museums is 'investment-led' at the moment (i.e. it is linked to particular Arts Council investments into specific museums through the range of investment and grant programmes available to museums). Accreditation data is different in that it captures information from all Accredited museums. However, the processes involved, and the way in which the data is collected and stored, results in **Accreditation data being held separately from other Arts Council museum data at the moment** within Arts Council's own data systems and processes.

Whilst it is understood that Accreditation datasets could be mapped onto investment datasets to bring this information together, this has not yet been done. Any mapping carried out at the moment relies on a manual process which is done on an *ad hoc* basis. **Consideration should be given to systematising the links between these two datasets within Arts Council England's systems** going forward as this would provide a number of benefits in terms of data analysis and helping to ensure that the data can be used for the range of purposes of data as set out in Section 2. **It is understood that this is achievable, albeit that it would require time to be dedicated to this task, and due consideration will need to be given to the findings of the review of Accreditation on such aspects.**

Finally, the extent to which this option is **desirable needs to be linked back to the 'what, why and how' questions about the purposes of collecting museum data**. A clear articulation of this by Arts Council will make clearer the extent to which such purposes could be achieved by bringing together existing data (option 1), or the extent to which the introduction of a new data collection process (option 2) would be required.

In summary, whilst there are steps that could be taken to 'stitch together' the various existing data collection practices to attempt to provide an overarching set of core data for museums, there are a number of challenges that such an approach would face. As such, there is clear merit in considering the alternative option, which is to develop a new data collection process.

Option 2: Creating Something New

In seeking to develop a new process that would provide a more comprehensive overview of the museum sector across a range of key data, this would involve the creation of a new means of collecting data from all Accredited museums to provide a current/up to date,

consistent, reliable dataset on a comprehensive basis from all Accredited museums in England across a range of core aspects.

Whilst the creation of a new process is more able to directly address some of the issues highlighted in Sections 2 and 3 about the current issues and perspectives (as set out below), it would require the introduction of a new data collection process. As such, it will be **important to ensure that it is not simply a new data collection process/practice for museums to adhere to that comes in addition to the current situation, but that it helps to address issues and perspectives set out in Section 3, in particular around the current scale of data provision and the overlaps and duplications that exist.**

Within this, the findings from Section 3 are worth repeating in terms of the level of current overlap/duplication – where two-thirds of survey respondents stated that there was moderate or substantial overlap/duplication in the data museums currently provide, and **85% of those that reported overlap/duplication stated that it would be helpful if their museum only had to provide such data once and for it to be shared between relevant organisations.** Furthermore, 93% of respondents would be happy for data about their museum to be shared anonymously with the rest of the sector.

These findings, which are supported by the interview findings, suggest that there is clear support for improvements and changes to be made to data collection practices to help address duplication, reduce the burden on museums, and improve and expand the sharing of data.

The introduction of a new process for collecting such data could have a number of benefits, including:

- Helping to **address the current patchwork** of museum data by collecting the **same data on a consistent basis from all Accredited museums.**
- Helping to **alleviate the current scale of data** collected and provided by museums – by seeking to **reduce this burden through sharing data** collected between relevant organisations. Such a process will also help to address the current scale of overlap and duplication.
- Addressing the perceptions about the substantial amount of information provided with nothing coming back – through both **reducing the burden** in terms of data and via the **sharing of data** supported by the majority of museums.
- Ensuring that the **purpose of each aspect of the data being collected is made clear.** This will help to move from a feeling of regulation and compliance for museums towards the use of data intelligently to support the range of purposes set out in Section 2.
- Achieving **simplification** for museums through them **only being asked once for certain data** – with it being shared amongst relevant organisations.
- Satisfying the **appetite from museums for sharing of data** to support sector analysis, advocacy, intelligence and benchmarking.

In addition, and as above for the previous option, the extent to which this option is **desirable needs to be linked back to the 'what, why and how' questions about the purposes of collecting museum data.** A clear articulation of this by Arts Council will make clearer the extent to which the introduction of a new data collection process (option 2) would be required.

Whilst these are some of the key benefits that could be realised by adopting this option, a **range of supporting actions would be required to achieve these benefits.**

First, this would require not just the introduction of a new data collection process, but the **sharing of such data** both between relevant organisations and also within organisations – including Arts Council England.

Second, it would require **data sharing agreements** to be established between the relevant organisations.

Third, it would require **reductions in other aspects of data collection practices** by both Arts Council England and the other organisations that would have access to the data.

There are three levels at which these aspects of data sharing, data sharing agreements and reductions in other data collection can be considered:

- **Within Arts Council England itself** (and in particular between Accreditation data collection practices and processes and investment-related data collection practices and processes).
- **With museum sector programmes and organisations funded by Arts Council England** (i.e. Museum Development and Sector Support Organisations (SSOs)).
- With **other funders and organisations involved with museums** (e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund).

The extent to which data sharing, data sharing agreements, and changes to other data collection practices can be achieved will vary across these levels, and from an Arts Council England perspective, the first of these should be the easiest to achieve, followed by the second. It may well be that proceeding through these levels in this order is the appropriate process to follow.

It should also be borne in mind, that this will not be a process that collects all data on all aspects from all museums – but one that **focuses on collecting a limited amount of core data from all museums** – the specific information that could be included in this process is set out later in this section.

In terms of the process by which the data could be collected, there are two main options from an Arts Council perspective.

Given that, as mentioned earlier in this section, Accreditation would be used as the criteria through which the museums to be included in any data collection processes are identified, Accreditation *could* also be the process through which data is collected.

However, this does not need to be the case, and the other route that could be used would be via Arts Council England's other data systems (i.e. the investment data systems and processes) where an 'investment' account could be created for each Accredited museum.

It is important to recognise that Accreditation is a quality standard process that happens to collect a range of data and information from museums for that particular purpose rather than a data collection mechanism for other, wider purposes. As such, the use of Accreditation as the process for collecting data for other purposes would need to be considered in terms of the implications on Accreditation, and also the extent to which this would, or would not, be consistent with the findings of the Accreditation review that is ongoing.

However, if the issues outlined earlier in this section about systematising the links between the Accreditation datasets and the Arts Council investment datasets are addressed, the choice of using Accreditation or not is not critical as the datasets will be better aligned, or joined up, than they are at present.

Other considerations around using Accreditation include:

- Making this data collection/provision process part of Accreditation would place a compulsion on all Accredited museums to provide the data. However, it will be important to ensure that such a decision would be consistent with the findings of the ongoing review of Accreditation and that such a decision be effectively communicated to museums.
- Making the process part of Accreditation may also have implications for museums in the rest of the UK in terms of the extent to which they would also be expected to provide such data – this could have a number of benefits (e.g. wider choice of benchmarks for museums) but may also raise some issues in other parts of the UK if data needs for museums in England impact on Accreditation processes for all UK museums.

On balance, and assuming the supporting actions set out above are implemented, Option 2 – the creation of a new data collection process is regarded as the preferred option based on the findings of this scoping study.

This would involve an annual, 'light touch', data collection exercise that all Accredited museums across England are required to take part in.

As part of the decision-making around the most appropriate route via which to collect the data, consideration will need to be given to the resources required to both create and manage the data systems and processes required. In addition, consideration will also need to be given to the likely timescales for such processes to be developed and implemented.

The timescales are linked to a range of other aspects that will influence the implementation of such a data collection process. Notably, the findings of the DCMS Museums Review, the findings of the review of Accreditation, and the new Arts Council England processes and systems that will be used for the 2018-22 Nation Portfolio Organisations and the 2018-22 Museums Development Programme.

As such, and to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for the supporting actions outlined above (and some of recommendations outlined later in this section) to be implemented it would be reasonable to assume that aiming to do this supporting work leading up to, and during, financial year 2018-19 would allow the new system to be fully implemented by 2019-20. This is regarded as a sufficient lead in time for all the supporting actions, recommendations, and changes to current systems to be achieved.

Recommendations for Arts Council England

There are three aspects where Arts Council England have asked for recommendations to be made based on the findings of this study, each of which is set out below:

- The most **viable and effective method(s) for collecting** data from museums.
- The **types of data** museums should be collecting.
- How Arts Council should **manage and share museum data** in the future.

Viable and effective methods for collecting data

Based on the findings from earlier in this section, about the preferred option being Option 2 – the creation of a new data collection process – and for it to be an annual, 'light touch', data collection exercise that all Accredited museums across England are required to take part in it is recommended that:

- Such a data collection exercise is carried out using an **online** approach (rather than via any other alternative approaches).
- Whilst this could either be via an online survey or via Arts Council's current online systems/portals, the **preference is for the use of an online portal where museums can self-manage the information in their own account**. This is a more efficient approach, allowing museums to update information about themselves (effectively a '**user profile**') each year rather than having to provide the same information on more than one occasion.
- The data collection process should be as '**light touch**' and **straightforward** as possible for museums to complete. Providing **clarity on the purpose** for each aspect of data required (in terms of 'what, why and how') will be important. This will help ensure only data that will be used for a clear purpose is collected.
- **Guidance** should be offered about both how to collect the data asked for, and how to provide the data via the online approach adopted. This may involve offering guidance and **support to museums**, especially those for whom there are data capacity issues. Such guidance should be published well in advance of the implementation of any data collection processes to allow museums sufficient time to collect the data.

Types of data museums should be collecting

The type of data that museums should be collecting via this new approach are set out on the following page. This list reflects the core data most commonly used by museums, and the data required by museum sector organisations, for the variety of purposes set out in Section 2. It also reflects the data most commonly reported by museums as having issues around overlaps and duplications.

It is intended to be a manageable, straightforward list of data that it will be possible for all Accredited museums, irrespective of their size or scale or data capacity and capability, to provide.

Whilst for some purposes, more detailed information would be required (for example, Arts Council expects some funded organisations to provide more detailed information about the equality and diversity of their workforce than that set out in this list), this is beyond the level of detail appropriate for this process and such information would continue to be gathered via other data collection processes (e.g. the NPO Annual Submission). An important aspect will be for the data collected via this new process to be aligned to other processes, so that any information asked for here is not asked for via such other processes.

Museum Profile

- Accreditation Number
- Museum Name
- Location
- Governing Body
- Type of organisation
- Scale of organisation
- Admission fees
- Main collection type
- Overall scale/size of collection

Participation/Visitor Data

- Number of total visits
- Number of adult visits
- Number of child visits
- Number of participants in school/education visits (split by on-site and off-site)
- Number of participants in other activities (split by on-site and off-site)

Workforce

- Total number of staff (split by full-time, part-time, casual)
- Number of volunteers
- Number of volunteer hours (annual)

Income and Expenditure

- Total admission income (by various specific types – admissions, retail, catering, donations, core funding, project funding).
- Total expenditure (split by expenditure on staff and total other expenditure)

Digital

- Museum Web Presence (Y/N)
- Social Media Presence (Y/N)
- Number of social media subscribers/follows/likes

How Arts Council should manage and share museum data in the future

A range of issues have been highlighted within this and previous sections of this report in terms of Arts Council's role in managing and sharing museum data. There are a range of aspects for Arts Council to consider in developing this area:

- Arts Council England should take the lead in establishing the new data collection process set out in this report.
- Arts Council England should ensure, and articulate clearly to museums, the purposes of collecting the types of data set out above and how they will be used.

- Arts Council England should provide a 'state of the sector' summary on an annual basis drawing on this data.
- Arts Council England should make the data collected available as (anonymised) open source data in a format that is usable by museums for benchmarking purposes.
- Arts Council England should ensure that data sharing agreements and protocols are in place with Museum Development providers and SSOs (in the first instance, and other museum funders such as HLF beyond this) in terms of sharing this new data with these organisations and thereby reducing the need for this data to be collected from museums by other means.
- Arts Council England should look to systematise the links between the Accreditation and investment datasets held by Arts Council. It is understood that such systematisation is achievable, albeit that it would require time and resources to be dedicated to such a task. Due consideration will also need to be given to the findings of the review of Accreditation and any implications on such processes.
- Arts Council England should explore the extent to which the data from each of the regional Museum Development surveys could be brought together into one overarching data, and ensure that the appropriate permissions and data sharing protocols are in place for this to be achieved.

ANNEX 1 – LIST OF CONSULTEES AND MEETINGS

Organisation	Name
ArtFund	Sarah Philp
Arts Council England	Isabel Churcher
Arts Council England	Ellie Collier
Arts Council England	Annette French
Arts Council England	Scott Furlong
Arts Council England	Cat Hammersley
Arts Council England	Liz Johnson
Arts Council England	Charlene Price
Arts Council England	Hedley Swain
Association of Independent Museums	Richard Evans
Association of Independent Museums	Tamalie Newbury
Audience Agency	Anne Torreggiani
Civic Museums Group	Ellen McAdam
Collections Trust	Kevin Gosling
Collections Trust	Gordon McKenna
DCMS Museum Review Team	Kate Bellamy
DCMS Museum Review Team	Lisa Ollerhead
Heritage Lottery Fund	Fiona Talbott
Museum Association	Alistair Brown
Museums Development Network	Claire Brown
National Museum Directors' Council (NMDC)	Suzie Tucker
NESTA	John Davies
NESTA	Sam Mitchell
South West Museum Development Programme	Vic Harding
The National Trust (Arts Council England)	John Orna-Ornstein
University Museums Group	Kate Arnold-Forster
University Museums Group	Lucy Shaw
University Museums Group	Paul Smith

Group Discussion	Date
Museum Development Network (MDN) Meeting	29 th June 2017
Major Partner Museum (MPM) Meeting	5 th July 2017
Arts Council England Museums Team Meeting	6 th July 2017
Cross-sector Museums Meeting	12 th July 2017

ANNEX 2 – SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

Following questions asked of all respondents:

Is the museum Accredited?		
	Responses	
Yes	78.3%	112
No	21.7%	31
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 143)		

Type of organisation		
	Responses	
English Heritage	0.0%	0
Independent	51.5%	69
Local Authority	22.4%	30
MOD funded	3.7%	5
National Museum	2.20%	3
National Trust	1.5%	2
University	6.0%	8
Other (please specify)	12.7%	17
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 134)		

Geographic location of the museum (region):		
	Responses	
East of England	10.1%	14
East Midlands	5.1%	7
London	9.4%	13
West Midlands	7.2%	10
North East	2.2%	3
North West	5.8%	8
Yorkshire & Humber	3.6%	5
South East	18.8%	26
South West	37.0%	51
Elsewhere in UK	0.7%	1
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 138)		

What is the current scale of your museum (in terms of visitor numbers)?		
	Responses	
Up to 10,000	35.5%	50
10,001 to 49,999	25.5%	36
50,000 to 99,999	12.1%	17
Over 100,000	26.9%	38
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 141)		

Do you receive funding directly from Arts Council England?		
	Responses	
Yes	26.2%	38
No	73.8%	107
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 145)		

Are you currently funded by Arts Council England as a Major Partner Museum?		
	Responses	
Yes	10.2%	15
No	89.8%	132
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 147)		

Mapping Museum Data in England (Arts Council England)

Following questions only asked of non-MPM respondents:

Please complete the question below, identifying which broad types of data your museum collects, and the reasons why you collect each of these types of data. (Tick all that apply):															
	Participation (visitor/ audience)		Workforce		Income and Expenditure		Collections		Learning		Digital Profile		Local Area		Total
For our own advocacy	92.8%	90	50.5%	49	78.4%	76	77.3%	75	73.2%	71	54.6%	53	50.5%	49	97
To support advocacy of the wider museum sector	76.4%	42	36.4%	20	43.6%	24	60.0%	33	63.6%	35	41.8%	23	34.5%	19	55
Requested by funder	88.7%	55	48.4%	30	67.7%	42	48.4%	30	71.0%	44	33.9%	21	25.8%	16	62
Required for Accreditation	85.5%	71	61.4%	51	68.7%	57	90.4%	75	68.7%	57	41.0%	34	27.7%	23	83
For our own business development	85.7%	78	45.1%	41	86.8%	79	58.2%	53	59.3%	54	52.7%	48	49.5%	45	91
To inform our own programming and exhibitions	85.9%	73	14.1%	12	49.4%	42	77.6%	66	67.1%	57	35.3%	30	41.2%	35	85
Legal requirement to do so	19.7%	13	54.5%	36	80.3%	53	30.3%	20	9.1%	6	4.5%	3	3.0%	2	66
For benchmarking ourselves against others	91.8%	56	44.3%	27	54.1%	33	55.7%	34	57.4%	35	42.6%	26	21.3%	13	61
Other (please specify below)	66.7%	4	33.3%	2	33.3%	2	16.7%	1	16.7%	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	4	6
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 102)															

Has your museum engaged with a Museum Development provider?		
	Responses	
Yes	67.0%	67
No	33.0%	33
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 100)		

If Yes, have you provided data to your Museum Development provider (i.e. by completing a Museum Development survey)		
	Responses	
Yes	54.8%	51
No	16.1%	15
N/A	29.0%	27
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 93)		

Was collecting/gathering this information for Museum Development useful/beneficial to your museum?		
	Responses	
Yes	41.11%	37
No	10.00%	9
N/A	48.89%	44
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 90)		

Does your museum use Audience Finder?		
	Responses	
Yes	17.3%	17
No	82.7%	81
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 98)		

Does your museum use Visitor Verdict?		
	Responses	
Yes	9.2%	9
No	90.8%	89
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 98)		

Only asked of MPM respondents:

As an existing Major Partner Museum you currently report/provide data to Arts Council in various ways (e.g. annual MPM return, Audience Finder, as well as Accreditation returns). How useful is the data you collect and report for this in relation to each of the following?									
	Very useful		Somewhat useful		Of limited use		Of no use		Total
For your own advocacy	38.5%	5	46.2%	6	15.4%	2	0.0%	0	13
To support the advocacy of the wider museum sector	16.7%	2	58.3%	7	25.0%	3	0.0%	0	12
For your own business development purposes	30.8%	4	46.2%	6	23.1%	3	0.0%	0	13
To inform your own programming and exhibitions	23.1%	3	61.5%	8	15.4%	2	0.0%	0	13
For benchmarking yourselves against others	15.4%	2	61.5%	8	23.1%	3	0.0%	0	13
Other (please specify below)	80.0%	4	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	20.0%	1	5

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 13)

Remaining questions asked of all respondents:

How much overlap/duplication is there between the data you provide for such purposes? (Please tick one only)		
	Responses	
Substantial amount	20.4%	21
Moderate amount	45.6%	47
Minor amount	18.5%	19
None at all	15.5%	16

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 103)

If there is some level of overlap/duplication, would it be helpful if your museum only had to provide such data once and for it to be shared between such organisations?		
	Responses	
Yes	65.9%	64
No	15.5%	15
N/A - No overlap	18.6%	18

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 97)

Would you be happy for data about your museum to be shared (anonymously) with the rest of the museum sector for sector analysis, advocacy, intelligence and benchmarking?

	Responses	
Yes	92.6%	100
No	7.4%	8

Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 108)

Mapping Museum Data in England (Arts Council England)

How would you describe each of the following aspects of data capacity, capability and confidence in your museum at the current time:													
	Excellent		Very good		Good		Poor		Very poor		Non-existent		Total
Data collection capacity in your museum (i.e. the time and resources within your museum for collecting data)	5.1%	5	7.1%	7	43.4%	43	37.4%	37	6.1%	6	1.0%	1	99
Data analysis capacity in your museum (i.e. the time and resources within your museum for analysing data)	4.0%	4	6.1%	6	35.4%	35	41.4%	41	10.1%	10	3.0%	3	99
Data collection capability in your museum (i.e. the skills and ability of staff in your museum to collect data)	7.2%	7	17.5%	17	53.6%	52	19.6%	19	2.1%	2	0.0%	0	97
Data analysis capability in your museum (i.e. the skills and ability of staff in your museum to analyse and interpret data)	6.1%	6	19.2%	19	40.4%	40	27.3%	27	5.1%	5	2.0%	2	99
Confidence within your museum about using data intelligently (i.e. the level of confidence within staff to be able to use data for the benefit of the museum)	5.1%	5	19.2%	19	46.5%	46	24.2%	24	4.0%	4	1.0%	1	99
Source: DC Research Mapping Museum Data Survey, 2017, (answered = 99)													