Applicant name: Museums Sheffield

Owning region: Yorkshire

Project title: Museums Sheffield - Renaissance

Project Description:
Museums Sheffield is ready to build on the outstanding set of physical, material and intellectual assets it has nurtured over the past thirteen years. ACE support will allow us to enter a new era of sustainable growth; developing our unique collections, deepening audience engagement, generating income and leading our region.

Amount requested: £4,393,000

Stage 1: Assessing your application

Recommendation: Fundable

Summary
Sheffield Galleries & Museums Trust (SGMT) is a current Renaissance Hub museum (lead Yorkshire partner from 2004) and now trades as Museums Sheffield (MS). It is an educational charity, a company limited by Guarantee and has a separate trading company. It was established 1998 to manage Sheffield City Council (SCC) non-industrial museums, collections, and workforce. It operates three public sites: Millennium Gallery (new build 2001), Weston Park Museum (redeveloped 2006) and Graves Art Gallery (refurbished 2007/09) and stores. In addition to the regional Hub role, MS has an increasingly important local/sub-regional role and potential national role (new Trusts). Currently hosts two MDOs and plans to bid for continuation. This proposal supports the continuation/development of the core programme.

Strong contribution to all 5 ACE Goals, although the pro-active approach to goal 4 is undermined by legacy of financial instability.

Goal 1: Excellence - Strong

MS has strengths in all areas of collections care, development, presentation and interpretation via local, regional and national partnerships that will be further developed by this plan. Increasing commitment evidenced to academic research, and alternative perspectives.
Goal 2: Audiences – Outstanding

MS has comprehensive understanding of audiences that clearly informs the programme plan, with sharper focus on local need and ongoing dialogue. Excellent track record of reaching new and increased audiences, on and off-site, and via technology.

Goal 3: Resilience – Met

Project budget essentially funds much of the outward facing activity of MS, including ‘core’ curatorial staff. The pro-active MS approach to addressing sustainability issues, worthy of a Strong score, is undermined by core budget weakness.

Goal 4: Leadership and Diversity – Strong

Track record of regional leadership through Hub, and increasingly at City Region level with non-museum partners. Plan to bid for MDO continuation. No external evidence of demand for Regional Museum Development post.

Goal 5: Children and Young People – Outstanding

Long track record of high quality provision that will be developed further via an increasingly holistic and sophisticated framework. Project will support targeted Learning development opportunities for children, young people and families of all ages.

Funding recommendation - Reduced Award

MS has applied for maximum 30% of gross turnover. Maintaining and developing the current high quality offer is dependent on the outcome of this application. Whilst the programme plans make a significant contribution to ACE Goals, there are some anomalies in the project budget that would bear further scrutiny, such as the above average % increase in staffing costs over the 3 years not entirely explained by increasing staff numbers. The budget includes funding to continue the former regional Hub training and programming activity, in addition to the intention to bid for MDO post funding. It is recommended that the award is reduced by this amount and all such activity considered as part of the MDO bid, with the exception of completion of the Pecious Cargo project in 2012/13. This would result in reductions to the total award of £169k, £184k and £184k respectively and awards of:

2012/13 - £1,275,000
2013/14 - £1,285,000
2014/15 - £1,296,000

These figures subject to further budget scrutiny as described above. If this RMGP bid is unsuccessful, the implications for Museums Sheffield are dramatic, and will undermine the
significant capital and revenue investment of the last 13 years.

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