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Measuring Up Programme:
Year 1 2018 - 2019

Contents

Introduction

The Measuring Up Programme (MUP) is a new programme for London Museum Development's (LMD's) 2018 – 2022 Programme. MUP is a combination of previous grants (Collections Care Grants and Digital Grants) as well as a new opportunity for museums (Mystery Shopper Visitor Experience Project) branded together as one new programme for the 2018 – 2022 funding period.

The overall objectives of the MUP were to increase:

- Staff confidence and experience in using self, peer and audience review/evaluation methodologies to inform programming
- The quality of collections research, care and exhibitions
- The quality of the digital offer
- The quality of the visitor experience.

There were 3 strands to the 2018 - 2019 MUP:

- **Collection Grants:** 4 grants of up to £500 were available museums to develop the quality of their collections. The funding could have been used to support development, research, care or interpretation initiatives.
- **Digital Grants:** 4 grants of up to £500 were available to museums to develop the quality of their digital offer. The funding could have been used to support purchasing equipment to digitalise the collection or enhance digital interpretation in gallery spaces, such as developing an interactive or film and other initiatives.
- **Mystery Shopper Visitor Experience Project:** Four museums were able to better understand the quality of their visitors' experience through participation in a Mystery Shopper Project. Participating museums were trained as 'secret shoppers' to conduct visits to each other's site using a questionnaire to assess the visitor offer resulting in objective and constructive feedback.

As part of this programme, LMD introduced changes to the evaluation process, and asked all participating museums to assess their work in a new way as well as contribute to assessing another museum's funded work in some way. LMD felt the introduction of these peer assessments would be an opportunity to develop skills and knowledge sharing opportunities between small museums. For those museums funded through the programme, who had an aspect of audience-related outputs, LMD also asked the museums to collect information on how the visitors felt the project was received. Again, LMD felt the introduction of these audience assessments would be an opportunity for museums to understand the impact the project had had on their visitors. Together LMD hoped this combination of self, peer and audience assessment would:

- Inform the participating museums understanding of evaluation methodologies;
- Provide a holistic (360° degree) view of the excellence of their collections, digital and visitor experience work; and

- Utilise the findings and use them to contribute to future planning and projects.

LMD have provided full information about the different elements of programme below, along with commentary and feedback it has received from participating museums on the new aspects of the evaluation process. This information will be used to inform the planning and offer for the Year 2 and 3 Measuring Up Programme.
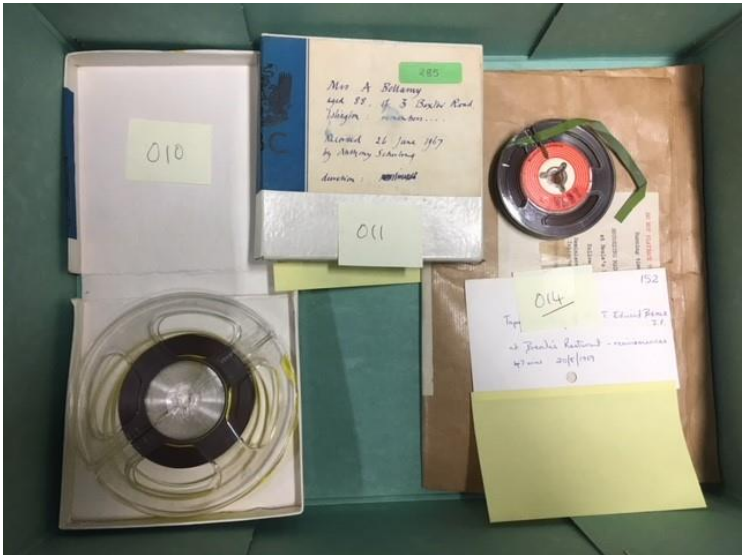
Collections Grants Overview

This aspect of the programme was managed by Yvette Shepherd, with expert input from Libby Finney, Regional Conservation Officer. There were a total of 6 applications to the programme, of which following assessment LMD funded 4 projects. All funded projects were given grants of approximately £500. A total of £2,000 was awarded through the MUP – Collections Grant Strand. All the projects were completed to schedule and 3 of 4 museums provided additional funds towards the final project.

It was really pleasing that the small grant of £500 towards conservation The Postal Museum project to restore the wheels of the iconic Mail Coach successfully enabled the museum to fundraise for the total of £12,500 + VAT required to complete the project.
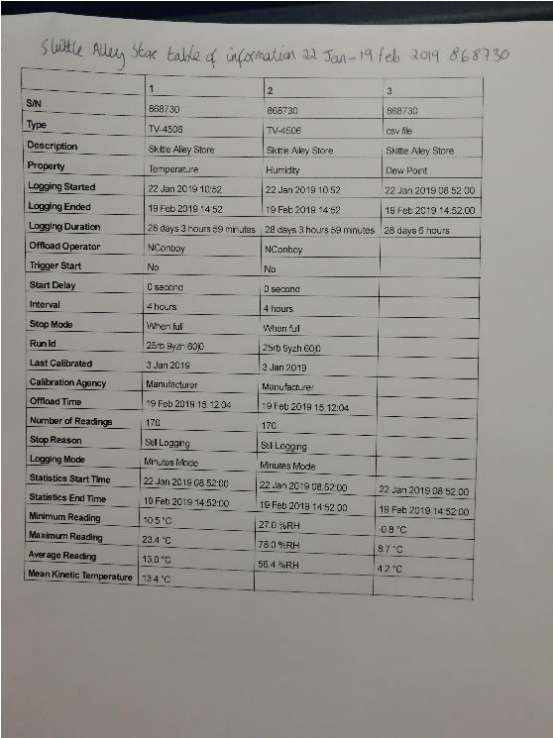
The grants were used to fund the following:

Projects to enhance collection care/housekeeping through the purchase of equipment or materials:	1
Conservation or conservation assessment of objects:	1
Projects to improve collection management through purchase of materials, digitalisation, training etc.:	2
Projects to improve emergency preparedness:	0
Projects to enhance environmental monitoring:	1
Projects to improve interpretation:	0

Descriptions of each of the 2018 - 2019 projects are given below.

MUP - Collections Grants 2018 - 2019

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Islington Museum £500.00 *Oral History digitisation*	**Project:** Project to digitise oral history collections currently held on inaccessible formats for use in research, learning and exhibitions and to eventually make them accessible to the public. **What was achieved:** A review of the over 80 items of oral history held in the Islington collection was carried out. The review verified that much of the material is of real value and interest to audiences. The museum worked with two external suppliers to digitise the collections – one for audio and the other for video work. These experts worked to correct levels and speeds to make the final outputs of very high quality. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"The project was part of a wider assessment of the Museum's collection and catalogue currently taking place. Oral history has been hitherto undervalued, but the project has helped staff at Islington Museum to see its importance both as a significant strand of the collection and as an additional layer of interpretation and means to illuminate for visitors the objects and documentation in their collection."*	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Museum of Philatelic History at the RPSL £500.00 *Repacking and digitising the oversized glass plate negative collection*	**Project:** Project to clean, digitise, repack large and oversized glass plate negative collection in time for collection move. **What was achieved:** By the end of January 2019 over 900 oversized glass plate negatives were digitised and repacked into drop-spine archival boxes and pHoton/pHotokraft four-flap enclosures, ready for a collection move. Eight Collections Volunteers were recruited to assist with the project. Each plate was condition and location checked, object descriptions were updated and reproductions were attached to the Adlib Collections Management System. Regular updates were posted about the project on the museum's Facebook site. A Temporary Exhibition was delivered between September – December 2018 sharing volunteer stories of favourite objects. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"The Museum now has an in-depth understanding of the scope of the collection and its specific collections care needs... As a result of the repackaging the collection will be better protected during the move from their current location to the new purpose-built store which will have environmental monitoring controls. The project has helped improve their overall collections management procedures including recording location and condition; in line with Spectrum requirements and their forthcoming Accreditation return."*	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Old Royal Naval College £500.00 *Environmental monitoring of stores*	**Project:** Purchase of portable data-loggers to measure temperature and relative humidity with the stores and galleries at ORNC. **What was achieved:** The data readings taken with the portable data loggers are being used to inform the strategy and goals for the Old Royal Naval College's Care and Conservation Plan. Priority areas for attention are being identified through the project and the team are also sourcing funding to acquire appropriate museum-quality enclosures to minimise the impact of environmental changes. Perhaps most importantly internal advocacy for collections management and care is continuing to build momentum within the organisation and a new role of Documentation Volunteer has been created. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** "*Not only have the readings from the loggers allowed staff to become more knowledgeable about preservation requirements for their collections, it has also allowed them to build up evidence for introducing improvements through better storage housing for items. Long-term, it will allow them to advocate better for the work the staff are trying to do to improve collections management and conservation and also enable a sustainable means of developing a temporary exhibition programme supported through loans in.*"	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
The Postal Museum £500.00 *Rebuilding the wheels of the Mail Coach: Implementation*	**Project:** Project to fit re-built wheels to the Mail Coach as part of a major restoration of this iconic object. **What was achieved:** This grant was awarded towards a project to re-build the wheels of The Postal Museum's iconic Mail Coach, which was in danger of 'catastrophic damage'. The small grant of £500.00 was used to remove the coach wheels ready for restoration. Effectively this small grant also kick-started the fundraising campaign for the project, levering in grants from The Pilgrim Trust, The Leche Trust and two individual donors. Fundraising was completed in 7 months and by Christmas 2018. The curatorial team and the fundraising team were able to work together much more closely than usual, with a mutual increase in understanding of the different areas of work. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** **"***Focusing in on such an object and ensuring its future life is a crucial part of collections management… This project opened new channels of discussion between development and curatorial teams, leading to cooperative working. Ultimately the development team have learnt more about collections and supporting collections management and care in the museum, and the collections team have more understanding of what is needed for a successful bid and how to prioritise needs for fundraising.***"**	

Digital Grants Overview

This aspect of the programme was managed by Alec Ward. There were a total of 7 applications to the programme, of which following assessment LMD funded 4 projects. All funded projects were given grants of approximately £500. A total of £2,000 was awarded through the MUP – Digital Grant Strand. All the projects were completed to schedule and 2 of 4 museums provided additional funds towards the final project.

The projects for the Digital Grant stream were of a very high quality, with a strong focus on audience engagement. 3 of the projects involved outputs visible by the museum's visitors. As such museum's also sort to discover how their audiences felt about the project and the impact it had on their visit.
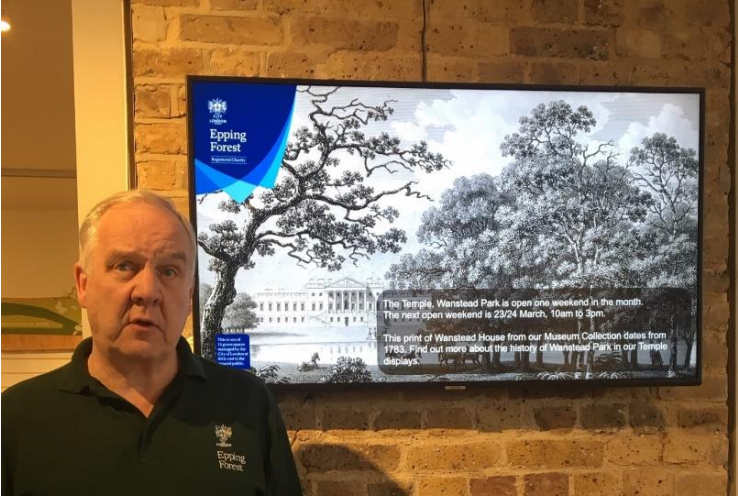
The grants were used to fund the following:

Purchase of digital equipment to improve documentation of collections:	1
Purchase of digital equipment to share content online and in-house:	2
Purchase of digital equipment to be used in learning sessions:	1
Purchase of digital equipment to be used within galleries / exhibitions:	4
Purchase of digital equipment to analyse audience feedback in-house:	0
Training session to improve digital literacy of staff:	0

Descriptions of each of the 2018 - 2019 projects are given below.

MUP – Digital Grants 2018 - 2019

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
British Dental Association Museum £500.00 *Interpreting St Apollonia*	**Project:** To create and show in the museum gallery and online a short interpretive film about a recently acquired 15th century stained glass window in the museum collection. The film will help to set the context of the window, St Apollonia (the patron saint of toothache sufferers) and explore its significance to dentistry. **What was achieved:** The project has had an immense impact on their digital offering. The window and film enjoy a prime location in the foyer/reception area to orientate visitors at the start of their journey through the history of dentistry. This is the first time the museum has commissioned and used a film to interpret an object. The project has raised awareness of using digital formats to interpret objects and success with this will encourage further projects of a similar model and the confidence to explore other digital formats. **Peer Assessment:** *"The project encouraged much more cross directorate working, much more than the museum had anticipated. The project has developed staff skills and has helped to raise the profile of the museum within the organisation. It has given staff confidence to explore film opportunities and to use film on the website and social media."*	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Royal Institute of British Architects Collection £500 *3D Scanning*	**Project:** To purchase a 3D scanner, which will convert objects into a 3D file. To build on existing staff knowledge of successfully using digital technology with the RIBA's collections and to support the digital learning taking place with the public at the RIBA. **What was achieved:** RIBA was able to purchase its first 3D scanner, which was successfully incorporated into its Learning programme in a variety of free activities for the public and provide opportunities for their participants to learn skills, enjoy being creative and explore architecture in new ways. The 3D scanner has been used in many ways, including to scan small architectural models created in plasticine by people living with dementia. The 3D scanner provided the means to skill up staff from across different departments. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"The scanner has allowed the museum to be able to utilise technology and engage people in workshops that would not normally be available without it. The staff in the museum and library are all being trained to use the new technology which will lead to new projects coming to light as people see the possibilities that it opens up."* **Audience Assessment thoughts:** Participants found the subject interesting and allowed them to be more familiar with new digital technology. Comments included: "*Interesting stuff.*" Out of 20 visitors, all rated 5/5 or above for developing new skills, and 5/5 or above, for the experience.	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
The View, Epping Forest £500.00 *A Screen for the View*	**Project:** To purchase an TV screen to bring more flexibility and sustainability to what can be visually display in the welcome and initial gallery space at the View. To create and display an integrated rolling slide show of images and videos, mini-stories about our museum objects. **What was achieved:** The View wanted their visitors to understand their displays and museum objects in the context of the Forest itself – and to encourage people to go out and experience the big outdoors and their 50,000 veteran trees. The screen allows them to show features from the upper floors of Queen Elizabeth's Hunting Lodge (adjacent) which are tricky for the less mobile to reach. They can also show fun pictures like this bird's eye view of the roof. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"The museum does not utilise technology… the addition of this digital screen and presentation in the entrance area is an excellent addition. It is a vibrant and colourful introduction to the forest and a good demonstration of how simple photographs and captions can attract the attention of the visitor. The project has empowered front of house staff & volunteers to celebrate the forest with its visitors."* **Audience Assessment thoughts:** General comments from visitors include that the display is "*very informative*", and that it "*highlights areas that otherwise would not have been known*". Out of 23 visitors, all rated 3/5 or above for developing new skills, with 20 visitors rating 4/5 or above, for the experience.	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
World Rugby Museum £500.00 *Digital Grant Project*	**Project:** To purchase high-quality photography equipment to update records within the collection catalogue & raise the quality of their digital communications through social media. **What was achieved:** Through the project, the museum has been able to increase the use of images on their social media platforms. The museum has managed to nearly double the number of Instagram followers they have on the platform since starting to use the new photography equipment. Other than taking images of their collections, the museum has also been able to use the equipment to take pictures of their galleries, temporary exhibition displays and events. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"It seems to have made a direct and successful impact on their activities. It has allowed the museum to take better digital images and meant that these are of a high quality suitable for social media, marketing, collection care and record keeping. Staff have gained more experience in using digital photography."* **Audience Assessment thoughts:** They have seen 507K tweet impressions from November 2018 to February 2019. If they compare this to the 3 months prior to the camera being bought where there were only 226.6K impressions they see an increase of 124%. The imagery that they are using is clearly making an impact. General comments included: "*Thanks for sharing this – amazing and brilliant information and picture!*"	

Mystery Shopper Visitor Experience Project Overview

This aspect of the programme was managed by Rachael Crofts and Elizabeth Coningsby. There were a total of 4 applications to the programme, of which following assessment LMD funded 4 projects. All participating museums were given grants to cover the associated costs of undertaking a mystery shopper visit, including funding to cover: entrance/temporary exhibition fees; museum café fees; and museum shop fees. Although a grant was available to cover these costs, the grant was rarely claimed by the museums involved (many used existing staff training/volunteer budgets to cover the associated costs). As part of the project all participating museums were invited to a Kick-off meeting to introduce staff to the survey and tips on how to complete a useful report that could be utilised by the visited museum. Each museum undertook 3 visits and received 3 individual feedback reports to use to inform future activities, training and funding bids. At the end of the project each museum came along to an Evaluation meeting to discuss the findings of their reports and how to use their reports going forward. All the projects were completed to schedule and 4 of 4 museums provided additional funds towards the final project.

Notable successes this year included working with Share East Museum Development Team to train and support LMD staff on planning and delivering a Mystery Shopper Programme. All 4 participating museums valued the opportunity to visit other organisations, with many citing that the visit had inspired ideas for their own organisation. All 4 participating museums were able to make small changes and are using the reports as evidence in larger funding bids.

The museums participated in the programme for the following reasons:

To better understand the museum's overall visitor experience whilst visiting their museum:	2
To better understand the museum's welcome to visitors:	2
To enhance staff/volunteer training:	4
To inform the museum's Customer Charter:	3
To inform future programming/activities:	4
To inform a funding bid:	4

Descriptions of each of the 2018 - 2019 projects are given below.

MUP – Mystery Shopper Visitor Experience Project 2018 - 2019

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Florence Nightingale Museum £40 (£0 claimed)	**Project:** As part of a recent restructure of the FOH staff and planning for a new museum. They wanted the assessments to inform future training for staff as well as support the brief/layout for the new museum. **What was achieved:** • Implemented new work routines and highlighted the importance of staff presence in the galleries • Recruited more volunteers to support their visitor experience offer and increase the volume of the offer • Positive feedback confirmed decision making processes during the retail review • Their Museum Assistants and most junior members of staff were able to gain new experiences by participating the project which will help them with their career progression • The team were able to understand their visitor's perspective more. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"It was good to remind ourselves that even small details can matter. It is a great opportunity to share best practice within the sector and see what great work other institutions are doing. It also helped the team with developing their soft skills and how to give constructive feedback. The team was grateful for the feedback on how to improve our visitors' service as this might have been overlooked otherwise. The FoH staff were pleased to see that their hard work was noticed."*	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Guildhall Art Gallery £40 (£0 claimed)	**Project:** They wanted to assess the effect of a recent restructure of their FOH staff from paid staff to volunteers on their visitor's overall experience. **What was achieved:** The project emphasised that retail range was important, both for generating income and engaging visitors with stories about the collection/amphitheatre. Previously, limited attention had been given to targeting products at varied audiences, but this survey highlighted the fact that some visitors would not be interested in their current offer. The project has improved volunteer confidence and knowledge, and also contributed to the gallery's agenda of profile-raising and networking. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"There were several areas of interest which we observed at other museums: community engagement/co-production models, use of innovation and technology in temporary exhibitions, and wide range of bespoke merchandise. It was also helpful to see how other organisations manage constraints such as existing in a shared-use building and being part of a larger organisation. Peer-assessment is a good additional tool to be able to include in our activities because of the variety of opinions received and the opportunity for a more continuous assessment of our visitor experience."*	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Hackney Museum £50 (£0 claimed)	**Project:** The museum wanted to hear from peers about their experience and whether staff on the desk needed any further training as part of the planning a museum redevelopment. They wanted to use the assessment to develop their plans for their new redevelopment. **What was achieved:** • Following the feedback from a peer museum in one of the reports regarding the disconnect between their target audiences, the content of the museum, and the lack of any resources in community languages, they worked with a partner to develop a project where ESOL students using the museum would help produce guides in different languages as part of their curriculum. They were able to use the report as evidence for identified need when submitting the funding application. • One pleasant unexpected outcome was how the visits and reports potentially highlighted strengths of their individual existing front of house staff and how they are central to visitor's enjoyment that otherwise goes unrecognised and unappreciated by their colleagues. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"The reports from the peer museums were a very helpful resource to highlight and evidence some key issues with the physical build of their spaces, and will help with their funding application. The reports also submitted by the peer museums will also help the museum to reapply for accreditation later this year with regards to sections of users and experiences."*	

Name of museum and grant awarded	Information on project	Photographs of project
Library and Museum of Freemasonry £50 (£24 claimed)	**Project:** Staff were keen to ensure the museum was seen as open to all audiences and they wanted to assess and understand the non-masonry visitor experience to inform their planning going forward. They wanted to use the assessments to inform future plans and staff training. **What was achieved:** • It will help and has helped the main visitor welcome for the Library and Museum, from the Front Desk and working with their building partners and also the front of house team approach to meeting and greeting visitors and how their public offer can be improved. • As they are looking to enhance their visitor experience and encourage more public to visit, the information has been shared with all, and made them think about how they view their visiting public and what they can do to assist them. • Additional improvements in relation to their new exhibitions and website design have all been topics raised and to be actioned. These were always in plan for their museum, but the information provided has helped focus those ideas. **Peer Assessment thoughts:** *"The fact that all the attendees gave such detailed feedback was vital to the success. All of this was also constructive and honest, another vital quality."*	

Conclusions on the 2018 2019 Measuring Up Programme

In Year 1 London Museum Development (LMD) used the basis principals behind the Arts Council England's Impact and Insight Toolkit. LMD's MUP was about getting museums to measure the 'excellence' of their public activities/programme offer and collections using self, peer and audience evaluation methods. Following reading all the literature and associated reports, LMD decided to scale the metrics it asked museums to evaluate against. This was to enable the non-national museums to realistically achieve and measure themselves/be measured against a smaller number of statements.

LMD selected 6 metrics (from the then 12 Quality Metrics and 15 Participation Metrics). LMD choose to evaluate museum's work using 6 statements: Presentation; Rigour; Originality; Excellence; Opportunity; and Skills. These statements were all asked in self and peer reviews, however only 2 were chosen for audience reviews (Presentation and Excellence). The quality metric dimension statements chosen were seamlessly embedded into the self, peer and audience evaluations and reports LMD produced and shared with grantees.

There were 3 strands to LMD's Year 1 Programme: Collections Grants; Digital Grants; and a Mystery Shopper Programme (run in partnership with Share East). LMD offered museums the opportunity to apply for either Collections or Digital Grants (£500). As part of this grant museums were paired up with each other to do peer assessments, and were asked to complete 20 audience evaluations (only if there was a public output outlined in their application). Museums could also apply to be part of our first Mystery Shopper programme with Share East where peer reviews and the statements were built into the project.

As part of the Project Report and Grant Claim Form museums were asked for their feedback on using the self, peer and audience assessment evaluation methodology and framework to inform LMD's Year 2 and 3 Programme. Below is a summary of the feedback received in response to the self, peer and audience evaluations.

Self-Assessment Feedback included:
- All felt that the projects they were involved in had helped open up opportunities for them and had gained new skills
- From the commentary provided many felt 'excellence,' and 'originality' statements were difficult to answer as felt it might be true for them (so were inclined to give it a higher score), but felt this wasn't necessarily the case when compared to the overall sector (so would be inclined to provide a lower score).

Peer Assessment Feedback included:
- Both the Collections Grant and Digital Grant grantees found the peer reviews very helpful – they felt it provided opportunity to discuss project, find out about others approach and helped inform thinking for their own organisations

- However, many of the grantees commented that peer reviews took two half days out of their work, which they felt was a lot for £500
- Many of the peer assessors also felt that the 'excellence,' and 'originality' statements were difficult to answer as felt it was true for the museum involved, but not necessarily true when taking into account the overall sector
- Museums involved in the Mystery Shopper Visitor Experience programme felt the peer reviews and associated reports were very helpful. Many were able to make small changes to improve their visitors experience immediately. All were going to use the findings to inform and provide evidence/backing/justification for larger grant applications in the long-term. However, many would have liked to have had a hard-copy of the survey to use during visits
- The museums involved in the mystery shopper felt that it would have been useful for LMD to offer a follow-on grant to address findings in the report and use the comments to inform their future public spaces.

Audience Assessment Feedback included:
- For those museums that conducted the audience reviews (only if audience-related aspect was outlined in their initial application), the museums collected these and received very positive feedback
- In some cases audience comments meant the museums could make some tweaks and the project's outputs could be further enhanced
- However, all mentioned that they had struggled to get people to complete all 20 audience responses
- All were paper copies, which meant analysis was difficult and would have needed LMD to have provided an excel spreadsheet. This would have been helpful for both the museums participating and LMD to collect, compare and summarise the findings

LMD was the only Museum Development region to launch a pilot Impact and Insight Toolkit programme in Year 1. During Year 1 and throughout Year 2 (April 2019 – March 2020), LMD have been working with other Museum Development regions, Arts Council England and Counting What Counts to find ways of developing a more streamlined non-national museum approach to the Impact and Insight Toolkit to be delivered regionally through the Museum Development Teams. LMD has taken a leading role in these discussions based on the feedback and lessons learnt from its own Year 1 Measuring Up Programme.

When discussing the programme with Museum Development colleagues, Arts Council England and Counting What Counts, LMD emphasised the importance of scalability, expectations and parameters for non-national museums to become involved in the programme compared to National Portfolio Organisations involved in the wider Impact and Insight Toolkit work. LMD also wanted to programme something that is useful and workable for non-national museums we work with for the 18 months trial, as well as develop a programme model, which could be used in subsequent funding years. LMD still believe it's best and appropriate for the statements to be seamlessly embedded into the programme and has advocated for this to continue in Years 2 and 3.

As such the Measuring Up Year 2 Programme has not yet launched to London's non-national museum sector. LMD were keen to tie the programme and Year 1 findings into the wider national Museum Development Network work. Given the timings left of the Year 2 Programme, LMD will launch its Year 2 and 3 Programme together as a longer 18-month programme, opening up more funding to London's non-national museums.

In shaping the Year 2 and 3 programme, LMD were keen to address and take on board feedback from the museum's who participated in the Year 1 Programme. LMD wanted to offer London's non-national museums a useful and concise programme, which would support and inform their future activities. As such LMD is proposing to revise the MUP in Years 2 and 3 as follows:

- Combing the 3 strands of the programme into one seamless offer to the sector
- Making the grant amount larger
- Providing a longer timeframe to deliver the project
- Broadening the criteria of the projects LMD will support/fund through the programme
- Providing additional funding to support peer reviews
- Building in the mystery shopper aspects into the peer review process
- Providing additional funding to inform future programming based on comments and feedback provided by peers and audiences
- Outlining more clearly how LMD will continue to provide support for successful museums throughout the grant period.

Following the Year 2 and 3 Programme, LMD will get feedback from the museums participating to fully evaluate and understand the impact of the changes and will share the projects and lessons learnt with the London non-national museum sector.

If you have questions about the Year 1 MUP, its conclusions or the programme planned for Years 2 and 3, please contact Rachael Crofts, Museum Development Officer Audiences: rcrofts@museumoflondon.org.uk / 020 7001 9876.