

SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP

SMG GLOBAL: RESILIENCE FOR A CHANGING WORLD

Science Museum Group International Strategy 2024-2026
July 2024

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1 CONTEXT

1.1 Brief history 2012-2023

- 1.1.1 The first Science Museum Group International Strategy, published in 2012, focused on creating an offer, establishing internal processes and resources, and building an international presence.
- 1.1.2 The second iteration, covering 2018 to 2022, was subtitled “extending reach, growing reputation and building resource”. It reflected the strategic priority in *Inspiring Futures*, our long-term strategy framework to “Extend our international reach”. It also featured increased emphasis on income-generation amongst the multiple drivers of the Group’s international work and this period saw the establishment of the new Cultural and Commercial Partnerships team in Enterprises.
- 1.1.3 Since 2012, from an almost standing start, we have established an infrastructure and delivery teams, developed products and services to offer overseas, built strong partnerships, introduced more global content into our own museums and generated new income (fundraised and commercial). The Group is well-positioned in the soft power and cultural diplomacy arena. Over the years, we have grown strong networks with more partners in more countries which in turn has led to more SMG personnel and teams being involved in international activity. Whilst there’s always more to do, it’s true to say that we have achieved our stated aspiration to become a truly international organisation.

1.2 Opportunities and challenges

- 1.2.1 The first 12 years of working to an International Strategy gave us strong foundation upon which to build the next phase and has opened many doors. We have accumulated experience and grown in confidence, extended the range of products and services on offer and expanded the international liaison teams. This has generated a growing catalogue of case studies and established a good reputation for partnership and innovation; many more people and organisations seek us out for cooperation than we can accommodate. Growing our capacity for international engagement has also facilitated increased sharing and touring of our content in the UK. The recent investment in Digital Reach offers opportunities to make a step-change in online engagement, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Behind the scenes, international working has added value to a range of stakeholder relationships. Foremost amongst these is our sponsor Government Department, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), but it also includes other funders, other UK Government Departments and public bodies. The wide recognition and strong endorsement of our international work by the Government and others, has created the beginnings of a virtuous circle that benefits the whole Group and that we should capitalise upon.
- 1.2.2 Notwithstanding the successes of the Group’s growing international, we also recognise some challenges. Some of these are a result of those very successes in that demand for engagement with us outstrips our capacity to deliver. Although buy-in to international working has grown and has strong senior support, wider internal understanding and participation is still somewhat patchy. We have been unable to invest sufficiently in dedicated delivery capacity, meaning that international projects compete for resources with ‘domestic’ projects, with the latter often prioritised for understandable reasons. Communications and planning have not been as integrated as they could be and a stronger framework for decision-making is needed. We have tried a lot of new things, with mixed success; the factors for determining success need to be better understood.

- 1.2.3 External events have also posed challenges. That the pandemic was a massive disruptor hardly needs saying. Not only were institutions closed, but all touring and international exchange ceased abruptly. The long-term effects of suppressed visit numbers and a reduced touring exhibition market are still being felt, with consequent impacts on income. The wider economic downturn continues to be felt in the UK and around the world, exacerbating the uncertainty and tension arising from increased conflict. The effects of climate change grow ever clearer, whilst the prospects of achieving the Paris goals remain remote. These factors were reflected in the UK Government policy paper, *Integrated Review Refresh 2023: Responding to a more contested and volatile world*. UK politics have been volatile, with unprecedented turnover of ministers, including at DCMS and a general Election in July 2024.
- 1.2.4 This rather bleak external environment plays out within the Science Museum Group, of course, and is reflected in our long-term strategy, *Inspiring Futures Strategic Priorities 2022-2030*. An extremely tight financial climate - Grant in Aid decreasing in real terms, reduced visit numbers and fierce competition for fundraising - lends added urgency to the need to grow income as one part of our goal to be a more resilient organisation. In the short- to medium-term, public programme activity is reduced, meaning there is less to offer to partners, and lean staffing means that capacity for new or additional work by core teams is more limited than ever. However, the Science Museum Group does not simply withdraw its horns in these circumstances. and there are still plenty of new gallery developments, exhibitions and public programmes to look forward to, supported by a strong track record in fundraising and commercial activity. Fundraising through and for international activity is increasing. We can tell positive stories that inspire a sense of optimism and empowerment. Examples include the remarkable global effort to find a Covid-19 vaccine, as told through our *Injecting Hope* project in the UK, India and China; how we can transition to sustainable energy sources as demonstrated in *Energy Revolution: The Adani Green Energy Gallery*; or showing young people the world-changing potential of a STEM-based career in *Technicians: The David Sainsbury Gallery*.

1.3 Approach

- 1.3.1 Our approach to the new International Strategy is one of evolution, not revolution. International partnership is generally a long game, requiring patience, persistence and constancy. The Group has an established suite of relationships in which a good deal of time and effort have been invested, and which remain valid in terms of Group objectives. We also have practical – sometimes legal – commitments that should be honoured. Our priority countries (India, Saudi Arabia, China, Brazil, USA) are not expected to change in the short- to medium-term, nor do we seek continuous expansion of international reach. Rather, this strategy is focused on areas where we want to effect positive change to make us fit to face the future with increased maturity and confidence.
- 1.3.2 This document is the product of widespread consultation over 18 months, including a valuable exercise conducted by McKinsey & Partners in 2023, the McKinsey Review. The McKinsey Review led to the definition of the two long-term primary objectives of advancing our mission and increasing economic contribution. It also provided a set of conceptual models for a more systematic approach to planning and decision-making. It acknowledged that implementing the necessary changes to the Group's practice and culture would be widespread and complex and would require both a long timeframe and additional resources.
- 1.3.3 The period to 2030 (as covered by *Inspiring Futures*) has been broken down into phases for more manageable implementation and monitoring. In the initial 2024-26 period, a major focus is on our internal systems, processes, structures and relationships rather than the projects we undertake, or the partners and places involved, recognising internal feedback concerning *how* decisions are made. Using the McKinsey review as our starting point we will use selected case studies to investigate and test aspects of the McKinsey models and the robustness of our own data and systems, aiming to create an integrated, reliable set of tools and processes for future decision-making. At the same time, we will foster a culture in which international working is natural, efficient, appreciated, and productive.

- 1.3.4 The second major focus in the 2024-26 period is to build a new workstream for profit-generating major international partnerships. The first example is the Museums Hub partnership with the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Culture. It is aligned with the principles that emerged from the McKinsey Review and will be treated as a pilot for similar partnerships elsewhere.
- 1.3.5 In implementing our International Strategy, the Group recognises the inherent challenges and continual change in the geo-political and societal environments. As we step up activity we will increase our capacity to monitor and respond to shifts in policy and public attitudes, maintaining transparency and clarity of purpose in our decision-making, in accordance with the Science Museum Group Ethics Policy.

2 INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY OBJECTIVES AND PRIORITIES

2.1 Objectives 2024-2030

2.1.1 There are lots of reasons why the Science Museum Group works overseas and with international partners. Throughout the period to 2030, two principal objectives will drive our decision-making and delivery.

a) **To advance our mission**, through the people we reach and the quality of engagement.

This refers not only to audience numbers, but who and where they are, how we engage with them and what they get from it. International activity does not only happen overseas but may take place in the UK by enriching the offer and building capacity at our own sites.

b) **To increase economic contribution**, through direct and indirect means.

This encompasses a range of financial elements that include (but are not limited to) fees for goods and services, fundraised income specifically designated for international work or which comes from an international source, and other income that is attracted to SMG because of our international activity and values. The last includes Grant-in-Aid from DCMS, our biggest single source of income.

2.1.2 Other drivers remain significant but are considered secondary objectives that may be taken into consideration when weighing decisions, or which are satisfied as ancillary benefits. These include (but are not limited to):

c) Soft power/cultural diplomacy: to promote and enhance the economic and social wellbeing of the UK and the cities and regions where our sites are located.

d) Organisational development: to innovate and learn from others, enhancing skills and knowledge within the Group and in the wider sector.

2.1.3 The International Strategy objectives are strongly aligned to the Group's Inspiring Futures strategic priority of increasing Resilience so that we continue to thrive through change. Our International objective to advance our mission clearly speaks to strategic priorities on Audience and touches upon those under Equity and Collection. The outstanding corporate strategic priorities of Sustainability and Digital are also highly relevant.

2.1.4 The Group's Sustainability priority intersects with the International Strategy in several ways. We will extend our ambition to be a world leader in public engagement with climate change science and solutions into our overseas work, manifesting abroad and in our own public programmes. Examples include sharing content such as the *Our Future Planet* exhibition 'Blueprint' on carbon capture and storage with partners and clients, and bringing international stories into our Museums such as those in the Science Museum's *Energy Revolution: The Adani Green Energy Gallery* (opened 2024) and *Future of Food* exhibition in 2025-2026. We also scrutinise our own practice – for instance, in 2024-2026 we will review our approach to touring exhibitions – and share our experience and expertise as we work to achieve net zero by 2033. We expect to learn from others, not only demonstrating the international cooperation necessary to tackling the climate emergency but embodying it through our collaborations.

2.1.5 Digital offers a means to reach almost every part of the world and we explicitly aim to increase our global reach and reputation through continuing to grow Collection Online and by creating new content channels, such as *Wonderlab+*. A new Digital Reach team has, since 2023, been upscaling digitally-led content primarily for established platforms such as YouTube. We will consider specifically digital projects more proactively in future phases of the International Strategy; for example, there may be opportunities to trial innovative activity with partners that are not possible in our own venues and programmes. In the meantime, we will seek to include international narratives in the current outputs and will be alert to opportunities for international digital partnerships. We also deliver some of the work through digital means, such as professional training and advisory services,

2.2 Priorities 2024-2026

- 2.2.1 The International Strategy contributes to all the strategic priorities in *Inspiring Futures 2022-2030* and our vision of societies that celebrate science. Above all, it aims to make the organisation more resilient, more able to 'Thrive through change'. The Science Museum Group's international strategic priorities are organised as four dimensions: Integration, Intelligence, Income, and Influence. The first two are primarily input-focused and the last two are the outputs we will achieve. These are shown schematically as four quadrants below. In reality, there is a lot of overlap between the areas, and they touch upon most areas of our operations.
- 2.2.2 **Integration** will be improved across teams, workstreams and systems. Because we have only been seriously working internationally since 2012 (a short time in museum terms) and have grown rapidly, our infrastructure has not always kept pace with activity. Colleagues do not always feel informed, can feel that it is not relevant to them, and may be intimidated by real or perceived hurdles. The aim is to 'normalise' an internationalist outlook within the Group and increase organisational and personal confidence so that international working is more thoroughly and more naturally embedded throughout all we do.
- 2.2.3 **Intelligence** refers to more systematic use of information from internal and external sources. The McKinsey Review highlighted that, although we have access to a good deal of data, it is often held by different teams and in different formats, militating against analysis, cohesion and transparency. As well as examining selected case studies for historic data, especially financial aspects, we will start to implement better practice as soon as practicable from 2024. Good data is the basis of effective performance management and we will build a suite of indicators and targets, aligned with the Group's planning cycle. Externally, we will increase capacity and capability in understanding and testing markets and tuning into the wider geopolitical environment.
- 2.2.4 **Income** is, perhaps, more nuanced than it may initially appear. In this strategy it refers to the whole economic contribution from international activity, and we need to do some work to define the scope and define metrics, and to make some investment in increasing capacity and capability. New, sustainable profit is a key prize to strive for, but income may also be for relieving existing budgets or off-setting committed costs. Some commercial income and fundraised income may be readily recognised as specifically from international activity, but some will be through indirect association; Grant-in-Aid is a significant case in point. It is also vital to recognise that the value to the Group of international working extends far beyond monetary value. In-kind benefits such as donated acquisitions or expert inputs are relatively straightforward, but we also need to better understand how to value 'soft' benefits such as PR, advocacy and influence – activity that often falls into the 'cultivation' phase of the McKinsey model.
- 2.2.5 **Influence** is concerned with our standing with a range of stakeholders, our ability to attract their support, and our ability to affect their decision-making in beneficial ways – sometimes referred to as our 'institutional soft power'. Key stakeholders include (but are not limited to) partners and potential partners ('Collaborators' and 'Magnifiers' in McKinsey parlance), funders, UK and overseas policy-makers in UK, and those movers and shakers who influence others. In all cases, we aim to develop a virtuous circle whereby contact with the Science Museum Group has positive outcomes and leads to further, more fruitful engagement.
- 2.2.6 Taken together, over the period to 2030 actions in these areas will make a step-change in a fifth 'I' – Impact. This will be felt through advancing our own mission and increasing the economic contribution to the Science Museum Group, and shared with our partners and stakeholders. Engagement with us should contribute in some way – big or small – to achieving greater equity, wellbeing, prosperity for individuals, communities and nations, as described by the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Defining how to articulate and evaluate such impacts is a task for the 2024-2026 period.
- 2.2.7 The 'Route' columns in the schema are the basis of an action plan for the 2024-2026 period. This includes a raft of measures to improve our internal ways of working and the establishment of a Museums Hub in Saudi Arabia as a test-case for major international partnerships. Delivering these goals demands increased capacity and capability; a new structure for an enlarged SMG Global team is proposed and additional pump-priming funding will be sought to enable this in 2024.

THE FOUR DIMENSIONS OF THE SCIENCE MUSEUM GROUP INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

Inputs

INTEGRATION

PURPOSE

- Participate in all relevant systems, processes and forums to:
- Inform, transparent, consistent and **consensual decisions** for the Group
 - Ensure **efficient operations** and delivery
 - Identify, create and **use opportunities**
 - **Deliver optimum benefit** for audiences, partners and other stakeholders

ROUTE

- **SMG Global reorganisation**
Dedicated interim role
Pump-priming bid to enhance capacity and capability
- **Understand cost benefit**
Pricing and profit
Resource allocation
Valuing non-cash benefit
- **Governance framework**
Mechanism/s
Metrics and indicators
Reporting
- **Smoothing the way**
Reducing barriers
Support resources
Enhancing comms

INTELLIGENCE

PURPOSE

- Establish timely, accurate & appropriate flow of information to:
- **Test appetite** internally and externally for activity
 - Make **informed decisions** and gain organisational buy-in
 - **Set targets** and milestones
 - **Monitor** and assess projects
 - **Review cost/benefit** to inform future projects
 - **Advocate** and promote work internally and externally

ROUTE

- **SMG Global reorganisation**
Data/info role in pump-priming bid
- **Understanding cost benefit**
Pricing and profit
Resource allocation
Valuing non-cash benefit
- **Market analysis**
Market scanning
Benchmark data
- **Risk management**
Data to manage and mitigate
- **Governance framework**
Mechanism/s
Metrics and data
Reporting

INCOME

PURPOSE

- Adopt a **data informed approach** to business cases and planning to:
- **Maximise value** from international work
 - **Increase weighting of profit** in decision-making
 - Embed **proactive and early consideration of opportunities** to generate income/profit
 - Foster a **culture and infrastructure** for successful, efficient delivery

ROUTE

- **SMG Global reorganisation**
Initiate new major partnerships workstream:
Saudi Hub as pilot
Assess SMG preparedness and appetite; pace and scope of work
- **Understand cost benefit**
Pricing and profit
Resource allocation
- **Commercial offer**
Assess markets vs SMG's current and potential commercial offer
- **Funding and Fundraising**
Integration between GE and F&P
Use data and insights for smarter communications in advocacy and funding bids

SMG GLOBAL

Advance our mission

Increase economic contribution

INFLUENCE

PURPOSE

- Position SMG positively as top and front of mind amongst stakeholders to:
- **Actively promote** our activity and brand; convert contacts to advocates
 - **Participate in decision-making** that impacts our own work and our future, and those of our sectors
 - **Increase overall economic contribution** to the group from international activity

ROUTE

- **SMG projects**
Designated international liaison role
Early consultation to identify International touch points
- **Communicate activity, successes and opportunities**
Data/info role in pump-priming bid
Step up internal comms for engagement and participation
Annual plan for HMG engagement
- **Define and promote SMG non-profit 'support mechanisms'**
Publish protocols (e.g. on charging)
Consider creation of 'pop-up' offer

Outputs