



## **Glasgow Museums' forward programme ideas generation exercise Suggested approach and activity plan**

### **Synopsis**

GM wishes to put in place a forum or mechanism that can support dynamic and exciting ideas for the service's forward programme that are in line with the service's strategic plan and informed by understanding of each museum venue's programming priorities and targets. This process of ideation should ultimately allow for a wider constituency of GM/GL staff and community partners to inform GM's forward programme and foster a stronger collegiate and collaborative approach to programming.

### **Who should be involved?**

Initially, it was suggested that this forum be attended (at least in the first instance) by Museum Managers and the curatorial team. However, there is now interest in this process from colleagues in Glasgow Libraries and several staff representing other areas of the service from outwith the management and curatorial teams. It has also been suggested that the newly established Community Forum be a part of this exercise from the outset. Therefore, it is suggested that from the outset, consideration be given to making sure that those participating in this process represent a range of internal and external stakeholders and not only the management and curatorial teams.

### **How will such a process be achieved?**

Such a process, as outlined above, cannot be achieved within a single two hour session. Rather, it should, at least for this pilot period, be staged over two sessions and make use of **Open Space Technology** (see Appendix 1 for outline of this participatory event methodology). This is in recognition that such a process is a very new way of working and requires careful preparation: expectations must be managed appropriately and parameters clearly set so that all stakeholders are clear about the process and their own agency within it.

### **Session 1: Preparation with two key stakeholder groups**

This session will involve the Museum management Team and the Curatorial Team, as two groups that are key internal stakeholders. By working with this smaller group first, the format of an Open Space event can be tried out so that it is understood and embraced by two key teams. It also provides an opportunity for these two teams to come together and use the Open Space format to discuss strategic and practical issues relating to programming priorities across GM's venues. A question to frame this session could be: ***"What are the key strategic challenges and opportunities presented by GM's forward programme 2014-2016/17?"***

Ideally, this session should use a facilitator to make sure the process is understood and is kept on track. See appendix 2 for proposed facilitation plan.

The notes gathered from each discussion session generated by this session will be made into a report which can be disseminated to the group and form the basis of preparing for the next, larger session.

In practical terms, a large room with flexibility to move furniture, is required.

**Session 2: Open Space event with all internal/external stakeholders**

At this session, other internal stakeholders from other parts of GM and representatives from other parts of GL as well as external stakeholders such as members of the Community Forum, should be present. The session should not be rushed – a recommended length would be no less than one full day, ideally two.

In advance of this session, the report generated from session 1 should be used to carefully frame the question and parameters which will guide session 2. The question should be sent out as an invitation to designated stakeholders.

In practical terms, a large space with several smaller break out areas is required for this type of event to operate best.

Those participating in this event need to know what the next steps are in terms of ideas generated. It is recommended that time be taken in session 2 for all participants to view the various ideas generated and vote on those that they wish to see taken forward. If this is not possible within the time allowed for session 2, the report disseminated to participants should make very clear what the next steps are. The realities of the locus of authority to make decisions or take action following the meeting should also be very clear at the outset of session 2.

## APPENDIX 1

### What is Open Space?

It is a self-organizing practice of inner discipline and collective activity which releases the inherent creativity and leadership in people. By inviting people to take responsibility for what they care about, Open Space establishes a marketplace of inquiry, reflection and learning, bringing out the best in both individuals and the whole.

### When to use it:

- ❖ Where conflict is holding back the ability to change
- ❖ Where the situation is complex
- ❖ Where there is a high degree of diversity
- ❖ Where there is an urgent need to make speedy decisions
- ❖ Where all stakeholders are needed for good decisions to be made
- ❖ Where you have no preconceived notion of what the outcomes should be

### Probable outcomes

- ❖ Builds energy, commitment and shared leadership
- ❖ Participants accept responsibility for what does or doesn't happen
- ❖ Action plans and recommendations emerge from discussions as appropriate
- ❖ You create a record of the entire proceedings as you go along

### How it works:

The Law of Two Feet means you take responsibility for what you care about -- standing up for that and using your own two feet to move to whatever discussion topic you can best contribute to and/or learn from

Four principles apply to how you navigate in open space:

*Whoever comes is the right people*

Whoever is attracted to the same conversation are the people who can contribute most to that conversation—because they care. So they are exactly the ones—for the whole group-- who are capable of initiating action.

*Whatever happens is the only thing that could've*

We are all limited by our own pasts and expectations. This principle acknowledges we'll all do our best to focus on NOW-- the present time and place-- and not get bogged down in what could've or should've happened.

*When it starts is the right time*

The creative spirit has its own time, and our task is to make our best contribution and enter the flow of creativity when it starts.

*When it's over, it's over*

Creativity has its own rhythm. So do groups. Just a reminder to pay attention to the flow of creativity -- not the clock. When you think it is over, ask: *Is it over?* And if it is, go on to the next thing you have passion for. If it's not, make plans for continuing the conversation.

### **Group size:**

To date, we know that Open Space accommodates groups from 5 to 1500 people. It can be run for a couple of hours to 3 or more days; consecutively or over time; at one site or at multiple sites connected by computer and/or phone and video. The longer the space is open, the more transformative the outcomes.

### **The steps in brief:**

1. Select a focusing statement or question for your gathering. It should frame the higher purpose and widest context for your discussion in a positive and clear way.

*NB: It is essential that the host (ie: GM management team) be open to listening to ideas generated by participants. If the consultation is disingenuous or the sponsor has a narrow or well-defined vision of the outcome, OS will not work. It is crucial to articulate a clear question, theme or purpose for the gathering that is meaningful to those involved, which provides the focus and the framework for the OST meeting. The sponsor's honesty in expressing the constraints, "non-negotiables" or assumptions under which the sponsor operates is also crucial. The sponsor must communicate the parameters of the work and the degree of freedom that participants have to use their creativity. These non-negotiables may include resource limitations; the realities of the locus of authority to make decisions or take action following the meeting; and laws, policies or procedures that are not open to change.*

2. Invite the circle of people: all stakeholders or all the people you'd like to have in the room. Include the theme, date, place and time of gathering in the invitation.
3. Create the circle: Set up chairs in a circle or in concentric circles, leaving space in the center. From the outset, participants know this process is not “business as usual”. The circle symbolizes the notion that leadership comes from each and every one of us and that every person’s contribution is equally valued.
4. Choose a blank wall for the Agenda Wall and label it AGENDA: AM, PM across the top. Set up a table near a wall you label NEWS. Put blank sheets of large paper (about quarter size of a flip chart page) and colored felt pens in the center of the circle. Near the Agenda Wall and the News Wall put masking tape for people to post papers on the walls.
5. To begin the gathering: Facilitator explains: the theme, the simple process the group will follow to organize and create a record, where to put things up and find out what is happening, the Law of Two Feet, and the Principles of Open Space. Then, facilitator invites people to consider topics/ideas for potential discussion
6. Opening the marketplace: the Facilitator invites anyone with a topic/idea for discussion to step into the middle of the circle and write the topic, their name, a time and place for meeting, announce it and post the offering on the Agenda Wall -- one sheet per topic—as many topics as he/she wants. This is the marketplace of ideas. Initiating a topic constitutes an agreement to begin the discussion and ensure notes are recorded. The process has no hierarchy; everyone has the same opportunity to participate and contribute. The topics are posted with a time and place for discussion and the initiator’s name: this becomes the meeting’s agenda. Agenda creation continues until all topics are exhausted. The marketplace is “opened” and everyone is invited to select the sessions they plan to attend.
7. When ALL offerings are concluded, the Facilitator invites people to sign up for what they are interested in and take responsibility for their schedules, using the Law of Two Feet.

From what appears to be organized confusion comes a clear set of objectives for each individual: the participants self-organize the rest of the meeting. As they are completed copies of session reports are posted for review on the News Wall. This provides an opportunity for participants to add their thoughts to the notes of the discussions of both sessions they attended and did not attend. In a multi-day meeting, a complete Report of the Proceedings can be generated in a matter of hours and distributed to participants. This Report represents a compendium of the wisdom of the group and subsequently serves as a reference for decision making and future planning.

## APPENDIX 2

Suggested facilitation plan for session 1, 13<sup>th</sup> December

TIME	ACTIVITY	FACILITATOR	NOTES
14:00 - 14:15	Welcome and introduce purpose of the session	Staff Member 1	<p>Purpose is for two key groups to come together to look at strategic programming priorities, using new method called Open Space. We are testing out this method of generating ideas round a topic in advance of doing this with wider group of internal/external stakeholders.</p> <p>Perhaps a hand out on Open Space would be helpful for people to refer to.</p>
14:15 – 14:30	Introduction to Open Space Technology and the question under discussion that the process will allow us to answer	TBC	<p>The question could be: <i>“What are the key strategic challenges and opportunities presented by GM’s forward programme 2014-2016/17?”</i></p> <p>The question should be clearly visible to everyone.</p> <p>Steps outlined in appendix 1 quickly reviewed – reminder to group that they can move round the discussions anytime (Law of Two Feet)</p>
14:30 – 14:45	Conversation topics generated by group	TBC	Participants are asked to write their proposed conversation

	in response to the question posed.		topic on piece of paper.  There will need to be a limit to the number of issues generated due to tightness of timescales.
14:45 – 14:50	Participants who have generated discussion topics move to a table or area of the room where they can conduct the discussion		Make sure that paper and pens are available for each discussion group. Person generating discussion should scribe the resulting conversation (or ask someone participating to do this)
14:55 – 16:20	Discussion sessions take place	GROUP	Reminder to group that they can stay with one discussion for as long as they want but are free to move on and join another one at anytime they choose.
16:20 – 16:30	Discussion are brought to a close and records of all conversation put on wall for group to review	TBC	Put all sheets on wall
16:30 – 16:45	Conclusions: take opportunity to review ideas on the wall and add anything else up that you may feel you want to  Define next steps	TBC	The next steps are that the record of all the conversation topics discussed today will be typed up and disseminated to the group. The resulting report will be used to plan the larger Open Space session