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# The New Zealand Museum Sector Skill Shortages and Training Needs

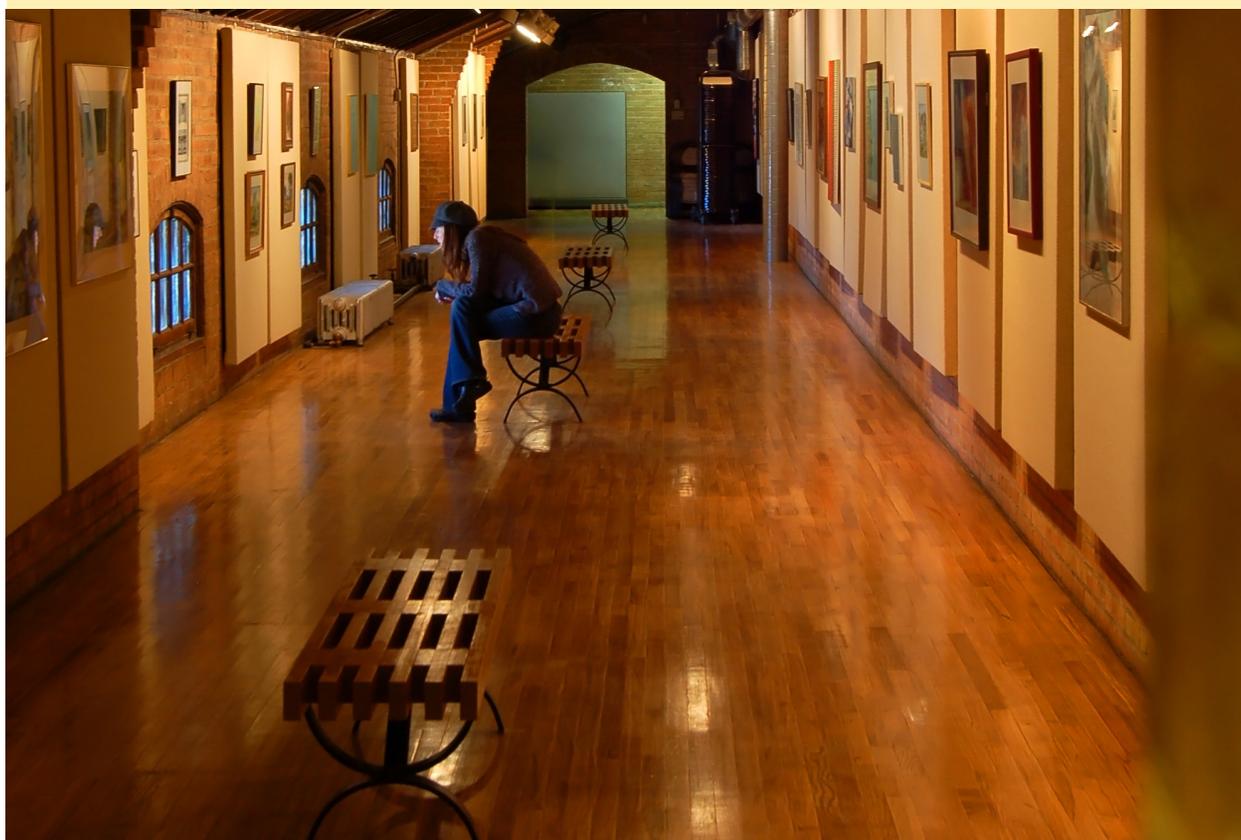
## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Extracts from the report for  
Projects International

as consultant to the  
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This summary is based on findings from a series of interviews with key individuals from within the Museum sector and national sector organisations.

Findings from this research will inform the development of a sector specific skills development strategy for ATTTO designed to meet the workforce development and training needs of the Museum sector.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### MARKET CONDITIONS

- Museums are operating in a rapidly changing environment of economic uncertainty.
- The economic downturn affects sources of funding for museums and leaves them operating with lean budgets.
- Visitors, and other stakeholders, now demand more interactive experiences, customer services, and public programmes.
- Museums are increasingly aware of their potential to add value to their community by attracting cultural tourists and have become key partners in the tourism industry.
- Museums face strong competition for skilled customer service staff from tourism operators, and other local businesses.
- The role of the museum in smaller communities is changing, especially where the local community may have a stronger sense of ownership of 'their' museum.
- Emerging strengths of museums as visitor attractions can create tensions with traditional roles – e.g. as community heritage resources.

### RECRUITMENT AND PROMOTION OF THE INDUSTRY

- Recruits to museum-specific positions are motivated through their own passion and interest, rather than salaries.
- Remuneration offered by the Museum sector cannot compete with other sectors that require similar skills.
- The sector mainly relies on the museum networks such as those provided by Museums Aotearoa in order to recruit staff with nearly half of informants using this channel.
- Volunteering is viewed as one entry point to the sector and as a stepping stone into a museum career.

- Customer service roles are becoming a much stronger layer in the museum workforce with many new recruits being sought from the hospitality and tourism sectors to fill front-of-house positions.
- Museums are not attracting Māori staff, or other ethnic minorities. More Museum sector support is needed to attract young Māori into curatorial/collection roles in particular.
- Filling senior roles in medium-sized and larger museums from within the New Zealand Museum sector is challenging.
- The complexities of many larger museum operations create a demand for high level managerial and leadership skills, which are difficult to find from within both the Museum sector and the wider labour market.

### SCREENING AND PRE-ASSESSMENT

- There are no generally accepted industry standards for recruitment, although degrees and postgraduate museum studies are commonly sought.
- The most sought after soft skills in the sector are: customer service and interpersonal skills; verbal and written communication skills; time management; and bicultural orientation.
- The most sought after technical and occupation-specific skills are: computer literacy and ICT skills; management, leadership, business and entrepreneurial skills; archival, curatorial and conservation skills.
- The main gaps in available skills are: ICT and computer literacy; visitor and customer service skills; conservation and curatorial skills; management, leadership, business and entrepreneurial skills.
- Informants regard literacy and numeracy as important, but do not automatically test candidates for these skills.
- Recruits for museum-specific positions are screened for qualifications and experience but hired on attitude, personality and team fit.

### INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS / CREATION OF PERSONAL PORTFOLIO

- Induction programmes are offered by 65% of the museums interviewed.

- Structured personal development programmes are common in the larger museums, and those with a parent organisation.
- Recruits to museum-specific roles are highly educated and independent learners, adjusting readily in the medium-sized and larger museums.
- Mentoring occurs widely more informally than formally, with the Museum Graduate Internship Programme (MGIP), offered through National Services Te Paerangi (NSTP), an example of sector-wide mentoring.
- There is a greater expectation for more professional development opportunities by way of compensation for the modest salaries.

#### **ON AND OFF-JOB LEARNING AND SUPPORT**

- The majority of training in the Museum sector is conducted face-to-face and takes place internally.
- Training is delivered on-the-job; by shadowing others; by attending internal museum seminars; and by museum-led focused visits to other museums.
- On-the-job training is considered to be the most effective way of providing learning support for new recruits. One training method that has limited uptake in the sector is e-Learning.
- Informants identify gaps in museum-specific training as: interpretation; writing; education; exhibition design; digitisation and curatorial practice.
- The major training gaps are for those in mid-career, who need preparation to step up from museum-specific roles (e.g. with collections) to management responsibilities.

#### **ASSESSMENT AND MODERATION**

- Staff assessment in larger museums involves regular performance planning and reviews with a focus on job requirements and agreed goals, including training and achievement of qualifications.
- Industry support mainly comprises NSTP's workshops, their resource guides and the New Zealand Museums Standards Scheme (an institutional self-review programme).
- Assessment against the National Standards of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) are not yet common practice.

This results from a sector-wide lack of familiarity with the NZQA and the National Qualifications Framework.

- The actual terminology of unit standards, assessment and moderation is not widely understood.
- Few museums had any experience or insight into the NQF moderation processes.

#### **QUALIFICATION ALIGNMENT / RETENTION AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

- Candidates for museum specific roles, especially interpretation, collections management, conservation and curatorship, are expected to be qualified to at least degree level.
- The museum-specific qualifications cited most frequently are academic Museum Studies, and the Certificate of Museum Practice which ATTTO accredits.
- Strengths of museums' professional development programmes include flexibility, good access to training, and sector support.
- Budget, available time, and adequate external financial support are identified as three of the biggest inhibitors to the expansion of professional development opportunities in the sector.
- Provision, support and encouragement of training can assist workforce retention despite the attendant risk of upskilled staff leaving for new appointments.

#### **FUTURE TRENDS AND CHALLENGES**

- Financial support and its continuity in the present economic climate is the greatest challenge facing the Museum sector in the next five years, creating impacts on all areas of an organisation's ability to operate including staff training, and the ability to address skill needs.
- The greatest skill shortages will continue to be in conservation, exacerbated by the associated costs and duration of training overseas. Customer service, management, leadership, business and entrepreneurship skills are also predicted to be of concern.
- Emerging technologies and new media require individuals to constantly update ICT skills and information literacy.

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