D RS Digital Incubator
for Museums

Jury Panel Statement

We were delighted to see many great submissions for the second stage of DOORS - Digital Incubator for Museums. The call provided an opportunity for museums to reflect and challenge themselves. We were happy to see many of them step out of their comfort zone and contribute to an ecosystem of possibilities in terms of content, impact, engagement and business models. The thoughtful projects testify to the commitment to digitalisation in small and medium-sized museums.

Our role was to select 20 museums that would continue the implementation of their pilot in the second phase of the incubation programme.
We looked at how pilots had evolved since the first stage. Projects were more mature and reflexive this time, and most proposals blossomed. Indeed, the best projects were the ones not afraid to make changes to their initial ideas. We noticed the enthusiasm for the incubation process manifested in the way many projects built on learnings from it to become more focused, more audience-centric and define clear objectives.

While in the first stage, many projects still needed to consider their target audiences, their needs and motivations, the submissions to the second call showed how they matured in this regard. Proposals now included audience research, focused on defining target audiences, and reflected on their needs. The selected projects were particularly interested in co-creation approaches and two-way communication between visitors and curators/experts. While some aptly use digital tools to address more diverse audiences and inclusion is placed at the heart of the pilot and integrated within the broader organisation strategy, this remains an area where more work must be done in the future.

We have seen a shift from the tendency to use "flashy" technology without analysis to attempts to understand which technology can be meaningfully used in a particular context. The projects showed an increased awareness that digital content does not automatically attract more audiences and that digital tools must be used to empower and turn audiences into co-creators. We believe this is a prerequisite for any public institution to become less top-down and elitist.
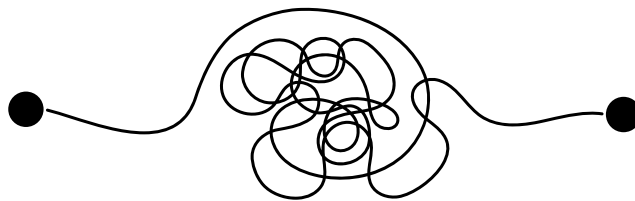
Proposals also became more focused and defined their identity or unique value proposition. Organisations started thinking about the measure of success for their projects, and we were pleased to see fewer cases in which success is solely equated with increases in visitor numbers. Museums must now work up specific targets and audience KPIs and refine their success criteria.

Refining the focus also resulted in a great diversity of projects, ranging from digital institutional strategies and deep audience research to operational/tangible ideas like innovative display labels or social media campaigns. Several proposals will experiment with exciting ways of mixing the physical and the digital.

We were glad to see more museums consider how their pilots could be disseminated, acknowledging the importance of sharing and adopting innovation (swarm intelligence). We hope to see more institutions connecting and breaking the silos with ICT, making the most of its inherent possibilities.

We are thrilled with the fantastic range of projects across a large variety of cultural institutions, including nature, art, science, social history, and historic houses, going into the second stage of the incubation programme. We wish the 20 projects the best of luck and look forward to seeing them become a reality, sharing learnings and offering models to the sector.