Museum Leadership Training Course: Collections Care, Exhibitions and Visitor Funding

23 – 27 November 2026
Geneva

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Ref: 925_41940 **Date:** 23 – 27 November 2026 **Location:** Geneva **Fees:** 5500 GBP

Programme Summary

Museum leadership is the subject of this one-week training course for museum directors, heads of collections, curators and cultural ministry officials, taught at managerial level and ending in a museum operating plan. A museum must protect objects while opening them to visitors and funding the work, yet policy, care, display and income are often handled apart. The programme moves from collections policy to care and risk, exhibition planning and visitor funding, using prepared cases from a national museum and a city heritage site. Mars Training Centre UK delivers this programme on museum leadership to cohorts from different organisations.

The Business Case

Leaders who set a clear collections policy, rank risks to objects and plan exhibitions against a budget keep the collection safe and the galleries open to the public, in national and local institutions alike. Sound museum governance also gives funders and boards one account of what the museum holds, what it shows and what it earns, so that staffing and capital choices follow stated priorities. The programme works on the measures below.

- Collection Condition: Improves when care priorities follow a survey and a ranked risk register.
- Visitor Income: Grows when exhibitions and pricing are planned for defined audience segments.
- Funding Resilience: Strengthens when income comes from several sources reported to the board.

Principles and Evidence Base

- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums: The ethical code of the international museum council, applied in Session 1 to frame acquisition, disposal and public trust decisions.
- ISO 31000: The international standard for risk management, applied in Session 2 to rank threats to objects, buildings and visitors.
- ISO 20121: The international standard for event sustainability management systems, applied in Session 3 to review exhibitions and public programmes.

Intended Participants

- Museum directors who answer to a board or ministry for the whole institution.
- Heads of collections who decide how objects are stored, lent and recorded.
- Curators who plan displays and interpretation for different audiences.
- Cultural ministry officials who oversee several museums and approve their budgets.

Typical settings include national museums, city heritage sites, university collections and cultural heritage authorities.

Learning Outcomes

1. Participants will be able to evaluate a collections policy against an ethical code.
2. Participants will be able to diagnose conservation and storage risks from a condition survey.
3. Participants will be able to prioritise collection risks in a ranked register.
4. Participants will be able to construct an exhibition plan with a budget and schedule.
5. Participants will be able to compare income sources and justify a funding mix.
6. Participants will be able to formulate a museum operating plan for board approval.

Programme Structure

Day 1: Museum Leadership Foundations and Collections Policy

What must a collections policy settle before any care, loan or display decision?

- Ethics Decision Checklist Under the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums
- Collections Policy Outline
- Acquisition and Disposal Decision Sheet
- Collection Significance Statement Template
- Governance and Mandate Map

Day 2: Collections Care, Storage and Risk

How are care priorities set and threats to the collection ranked?

- Collection Condition Survey Sheet
- Storage and Display Environment Checklist
- Collections Risk Register Under ISO 31000
- Loan and Handling Protocol
- Emergency and Salvage Priority List

Day 3: Exhibition Planning and Public Programmes

How does an exhibition move from idea to a costed and scheduled programme?

- Exhibition Concept Brief
- Programme Calendar Grid
- Exhibition Budget and Schedule Template
- Interpretation and Audience Plan
- Programme Sustainability Review Under ISO 20121

Day 4: Visitor Funding and Governance

How are admissions, grants and partnerships combined into one funding plan?

- Visitor Segment Profile
- Income Mix Model
- Grant and Sponsorship Case Outline
- Admissions and Pricing Options Table
- Board Reporting Dashboard

Day 5: Museum Operating Plan for One Institution

Do the earlier tools join into a plan that a board can approve?

- Applying the Session 1 Collections Policy Outline
- Testing the Session 2 Risk Register
- Checking the Session 3 Exhibition Budget
- Reviewing the Session 4 Income Mix Model
- Completing the Museum Operating Plan

Methodology

The programme is a case analysis built on prepared records from a national museum and a city heritage site: collection registers, condition surveys, exhibition budgets and visitor figures. Participants rank risks, plan an exhibition and balance income sources in small groups, then defend the operating plan to peers acting as a museum board.

- Suggested activity: Ranking ten risks to a mixed collection of paper, textile and metal objects.
- Suggested activity: Costing a six-month exhibition against a fixed budget.
- Suggested activity: Choosing between three funding proposals for a new gallery.

Capstone Output

Each participant completes a museum operating plan for one institution. It holds a collections policy outline, a risk register, an exhibition budget, an income mix and a board reporting dashboard. At work it goes to the board or ministry for approval and sets the yearly review routine.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is museum leadership training suitable for managers who are not conservators?

Yes. Museum leadership is taught through prepared cases and templates; you need responsibility for a museum, a collection or a cultural budget, not conservation training.

Which standards does museum leadership rest on in this training?

Museum leadership here rests on the ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums, ISO 31000 for risk management and ISO 20121 for event sustainability management.

How is the operating plan from museum leadership training used at work?

You take the operating plan to your board or ministry, use its risk register to direct care spending, and keep its income mix as the funding review format.

How does museum leadership differ from a programme on heritage conservation science?

Museum leadership concentrates on policy, risk, exhibitions and funding across the institution, while a programme on heritage conservation science concentrates on the materials and treatment of individual objects.