



CASE STUDY

Building partnerships with the Health, Wealth and Happiness project

Inverness Museum & Art Gallery



Resilience

Collaboration

Overview

'Health, Wealth and Happiness' was an MGS-funded project at Inverness Museum & Art Gallery (IMAG) which explored the history of healthcare in the Highlands. Joe Setch, who worked at IMAG as a Museum Assistant for the duration of the project, describes how collaboration with businesses, charities, groups, and individuals played an essential role in ensuring its success.



This project meets the aims set out in the [collaboration](#) priority area of the strategy for Scotland's museums and galleries.

The project

Health, Wealth and Happiness was a year-long project which culminated in an exhibition in the summer of 2022. Our key aims as a Collections team were to gain experience of organising a large exhibition, increase our knowledge of the museum's medical collections, conduct contemporary collecting, build connections across the Highlands, and raise the public profile of the museum.

All our partnership work was rooted in opportunities for mutual gain. We achieved several of our objectives by collaborating with local charities, businesses, and groups: they helped us to go further with our resources, enabled us to tell more diverse stories in our exhibition, connected us to local communities, and led to an increased awareness of the museum and its objectives across the region.

This work also led to several benefits for our partners. This included opportunities for press coverage and social media content, display space in the Health, Wealth and Happiness exhibition, involvement in engagement activities, personal tours of the museum, and the exchange of ideas and expertise.

We established connections by making call-outs, identifying key contacts, utilising professional networks, and arranging meetings. But that was just the start. To build these connections into



"Fantastic exhibition! ... Stopping to take in the music, the timelines, personal artefacts etc it really made me realise what we have all achieved to still be here and made me feel very emotional. I have been so busy living life day to day (I work in NHS Highland) that I haven't really taken stock of everything and this has blown me away. It's been done so sympathetically - well done!"

- IMAG visitor

effective collaborations, we had to be patient and proactive. We also had to ensure that partners trusted the intentions of the project and our ability to interpret their stories.

To achieve this trust we worked with partners to agree on clear outcomes. We fostered personal relationships, maintained regular communication, and emphasised our commitment to consultation and consent in all areas of the project. This resulted in positive experiences for everyone involved.

As Health, Wealth and Happiness was the first major temporary exhibition of IMAG collections in over ten years, we took a constructive approach to risk and experimentation. By trialling different methods of building and maintaining partnerships, and by evaluating the outcomes of these collaborative efforts, we were able to establish strong foundations for the success of future projects.

Challenges and successes

- By reaching out to museums across the Highlands and keeping them up-to-date with the project, we were able to secure several loans for our exhibition. Extensive contact with the National Library of Scotland also led to the high-profile loan of a rare medieval Gaelic medical manuscript.
- Building friendly relations with medical professionals had several benefits: they suggested contacts, donated objects, and supported our research and collections work.
- We tried to gather information from charities and community groups by emailing out surveys, but received only a limited response. We had much more success by switching to an informal approach which centred on phone calls, face-to-face meetings, smaller and more direct requests, and a greater emphasis on the benefits we could offer to partners.

Impact

- Thanks to successful collaboration with Inverness Botanic Gardens and local library services, 1,400 copies of our 'Well Wishes' wellbeing activity were distributed right across the Highlands. This activity met shared engagement objectives and took advantage of library van routes to disseminate materials.
- Meetings with the University of the Highlands and Islands have led to plans for a permanent display space for IMAG collections in their new Life Sciences research hub.
- By using IMAG's community gallery space to display artworks created by local charity service users, we were able to deepen our connections to these organisations. This paved the way for future acquisitions, museum visits, and engagement sessions.
- Working with external groups and organisations generated opportunities for press coverage and social media content. This help to expand the reach and raise the profile of the museum.

Guidance

- Do your research – scope out connections by meeting people for informal chats, and take advantage of established networks when identifying opportunities for collaboration and conducting call-outs for information.
- Invest your time in developing meaningful partnerships. Focus on quality, not quantity!
- Set partnerships up for success by identifying opportunities for mutual gain. What can you offer? At IMAG, this included display space, engagement sessions, and access to an online audience.
- Consider inclusivity when building partnerships. Whose perspectives are you missing, and what can you do to address this?

Additional information

Website: [Health, Wealth and Happiness project page](#)

Video: [Well Wishes engagement activity tutorial](#)

Contact: [Kari Moodie, Curator \(Collections\), Inverness Museum and Art Gallery](#)

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