

FROM ACCESS TO LEADERSHIP



TRANSFORMING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN SCOTLAND'S HERITAGE SECTOR

BY: NEXT STEP INITIATIVE

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Foreword



Professor John Struthers

I am delighted to endorse the work carried out by the Next Step Initiative (NSI) in relation to the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme. This marks an important step toward addressing persistent inequalities within Scotland’s heritage sector. African and Caribbean communities have long been under-represented in heritage workforces, leadership roles, and decision-making spaces. This programme was designed to challenge that reality by creating structured, practical pathways into the sector. Through paid traineeships, leadership development, board diversification support, and meaningful community engagement, the initiative has enabled individuals to develop as agents of change while supporting host organisations to reflect, adapt, and grow. The programme demonstrates that inclusion is not achieved through aspiration alone, but through intentional structures, trusted partnerships, and sustained investment. It is also vital that the learning from the programme is achieved so that it may inform and strengthen practice across the wider heritage sector and beyond. To that end, this Best Practice Guide will be an invaluable resource which can be accessed by other African and Caribbean groups and communities working in similar sectors and contexts. By sharing what has worked, what has evolved, and what remains to be done, it is hoped that others will be imbued to build more inclusive, representative, and resilient cultural institutions.

(Emeritus) Professor John Struthers
Former Director of Centre for African Research on Enterprise and Economic Development (CAREED), University of West of Scotland.
18 March 2026

Partners



Executive Summary

This Best Practice Guide presents the consolidated learning, outcomes, and delivery insights from the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme delivered by Next Step Initiative and supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The programme was designed to address persistent structural barriers limiting access to careers and leadership pathways in the heritage and museum sector for Black and Minority Ethnic communities. This aligns with national cultural and workforce priorities in Scotland, including the Culture Strategy for Scotland and heritage skills investment plans (Scottish Government, 2020; Historic Environment Scotland, 2024; Museums Galleries Scotland, 2023). This report draws on evidence from cultural labour market research, workforce diversity studies, and public policy analysis (Brook et al., 2020; DCMS, 2022; OECD, 2021; Scottish Government, 2021; Social Mobility Commission, 2021).

The initiative combined structured placements, leadership development, mentoring, and community-focused engagement to test whether an intermediary-led model could widen participation while strengthening institutional readiness within host organisations. Independent evaluation by Learning Link Scotland confirms measurable gains in participant confidence, professional capability, and sector understanding, alongside positive shifts in organisational practice, supervision approaches, and engagement strategies.

Crucially, these outcomes were not produced by placements alone, but by the enabling infrastructure provided by Next Step Initiative. Its intermediary role reduced organisational risk, strengthened alignment between training and workplace experience, and created conditions for meaningful participation. The model demonstrates how targeted support structures can transform placements from short-term access initiatives into sustained professional pathways.

The evaluation also identified areas for refinement, particularly around communication consistency, role clarity, and integration with accredited learning frameworks. These insights have been incorporated into this guide as practical recommendations to support replication, scaling, and cross-sector application. The guide therefore serves both as a record of programme impact and as a tested delivery framework for organisations, funders, and

partnerships seeking to build inclusive leadership pathways that deliver both individual advancement and institutional change.

This guide reflects learning from the first year of the three-year programme. Year 1 focused on programme establishment, partnership development, placements, and early sector engagement. The evidence presented here captures emerging impact as well as areas for refinement. Year 2 will build on this foundation by strengthening institutional integration, extending community reach, and consolidating the programme's long-term contribution to inclusive leadership within Scotland's heritage sector.

About Next Step Initiative

Next Step Initiative is a Scotland-based workforce development organisation specialising in inclusive leadership, employability, and sector-entry programmes for people from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and other underrepresented groups. The organisation works at the intersection of skills development, organisational change, and community engagement, particularly in sectors where systemic barriers have limited workforce diversity and progression. Its approach emphasises practical delivery grounded in organisational needs, supported through mentoring, partnership management, and continuous evaluation. This infrastructure enables institutions to participate confidently in equity-focused programmes without overstressing internal capacity.

Within the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme, Next Step Initiative functions as the strategic backbone of delivery. It brokers partnerships, aligns accredited learning with workplace experience, provides ongoing pastoral and professional support, and intervenes where challenges arise. This intermediary role ensures placements are meaningful rather than symbolic, that learning translates into organisational benefit, and that outcomes are sustainable beyond the funding period.

About this Guide

Purpose of the Guide

This guide captures learning from Year 1 of the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme and serves both as a reflective learning document and a practical replication resource.

It has three core purposes. First, it provides evidence to the National Lottery Heritage Fund demonstrating programme impact, learning, and value for investment. Second, it supports internal programme development by documenting delivery insights, challenges, and adaptations. Third, it offers an evidence-based model for organisations and sectors seeking to replicate or adapt an inclusive leadership and workforce development approach grounded in real organisational practice.

The guide draws on trainee experiences, host organisation feedback, independent evaluation findings, and observed institutional outcomes to identify what worked, what required adjustment, and what must evolve to strengthen delivery, scale impact, and sustain change. It assumes readers share a commitment to equity, inclusion, and long-term sector transformation, and therefore focuses on sustainable organisational change rather than short-term participation targets.

How to Use This Guide

This guide is designed as a practical resource for organisations, funders, practitioners, and policymakers seeking to strengthen inclusive workforce development and leadership pathways. It combines operational learning with strategic insight, documenting approaches that proved effective in widening participation, embedding trainees in meaningful work, and supporting institutions to move beyond intention toward demonstrable inclusive practice.

Although developed within the heritage sector, the delivery model is intentionally transferable. Its core components address systemic barriers present across multiple sectors, including health, finance, the arts, local government, education, and community development. Replication depends on ensuring placements are paid and meaningful, trainees are embedded within core organisational activity, and a strong coordinating infrastructure supports both participants and host organisations. Further detail on delivery components and adaptation pathways is provided in later chapters and appendices.

Chapter 1: The Scottish Heritage Sector Context

1.1 The Role of Heritage in Scotland

Scotland's heritage sector plays a central role in shaping national identity, preserving collective memory, and interpreting the past. Museums, archives, historic sites, and cultural institutions do more than safeguard collections; they influence public understanding of history and belonging. Yet these narratives have historically centred Eurocentric perspectives, often overlooking or marginalising the experiences of African, Caribbean, and other minoritised communities. As Scotland's population becomes increasingly diverse, heritage institutions face growing expectations to reflect a broader range of histories and voices.

1.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in the Sector

Research from organisations including Museums Galleries Scotland and the National Lottery Heritage Fund highlights persistent underrepresentation of Black and Minority Ethnic communities across heritage workforces and governance structures. Despite recent initiatives, progress remains slow. In 2021, only 2.5% of the heritage workforce and 1.5% of board members identified as BME, compared to approximately 4% of Scotland's population. This gap has tangible consequences: it limits diversity in decision-making, reduces cultural relevance for wider audiences, and perpetuates structural barriers to participation.

1.3 Barriers to Participation

Consultation undertaken during programme development identified several interconnected barriers limiting participation in heritage careers among African and Caribbean communities. These included limited awareness of career pathways, perceptions of cultural irrelevance, lack of visible role models, financial constraints, and the scarcity of paid entry routes into the sector. These barriers reinforce cycles of disengagement and underrepresentation. The Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme was developed as a direct response, aligning with national priorities around anti-racism, decolonisation, and inclusive practice while supporting both individuals and institutions to contribute to lasting change.

Chapter 2: The Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme

2.1 Programme Purpose and Vision

The Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme is a workforce development and systems-change initiative designed to address longstanding underrepresentation of Black and Minority Ethnic communities in the heritage sector. Delivered by Next Step Initiative, it combines paid placements, accredited learning, leadership development, community engagement, and organisational change support. The programme goes beyond individual employability. Its core purpose is to embed inclusive leadership practice within institutions, strengthen community trust, and create sustainable pathways into heritage careers for those historically excluded from the sector.

2.2 Programme Structure

The programme is designed as a multi-layered intervention combining workforce development with institutional change. Core components include work-based placements, SVQ-aligned accredited learning, one-to-one mentoring, leadership development sessions, and structured delivery coordination by Next Step Initiative. Year 1 demonstrated that diversifying the workforce and transforming institutions are inseparable goals. The programme therefore integrates organisational readiness and community engagement alongside individual skills development.

2.3 Target Participants and Partners

The programme engages multiple audiences simultaneously. It supports trainee leaders aged 18–30 from African and Caribbean communities, develops pathways for senior volunteers and board members, and works directly with heritage organisations seeking to strengthen inclusive practice. Partnership working is central to delivery. Next Step Initiative coordinates collaboration between host organisations, training providers, community partners, and evaluators, ensuring that placements operate within a shared framework of support and accountability.

2.4 What the Programme Delivered (Year 1)

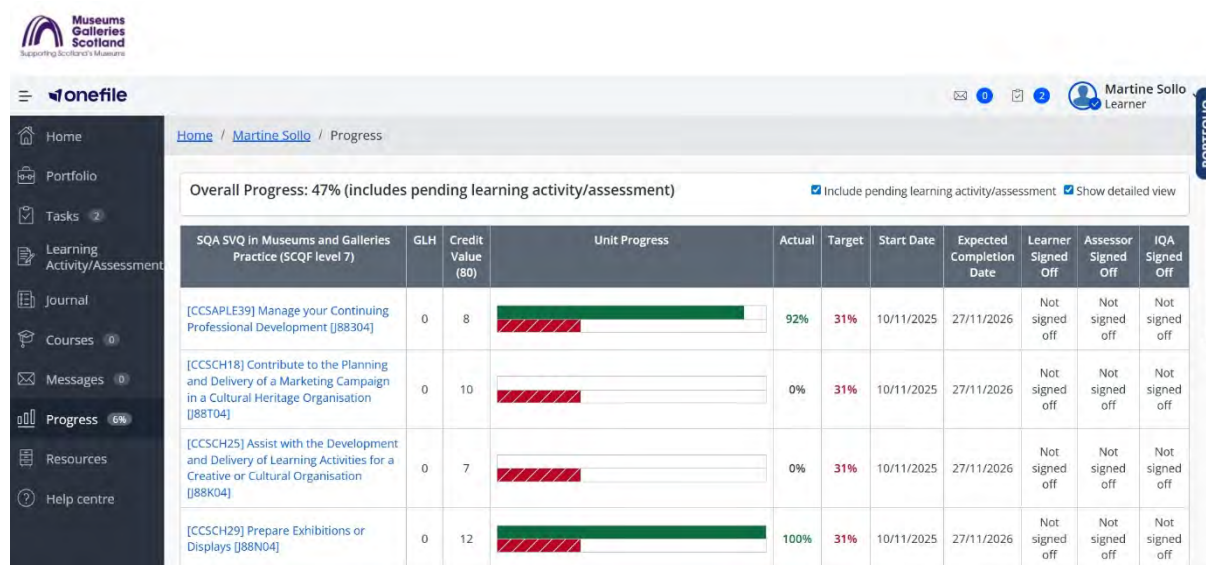
During the first delivery period (Year 1), the programme achieved several key milestones. Four trainees were recruited across Glasgow and Edinburgh, with three completing the programme and one withdrawing due to bereavement and family circumstances. Paid

placements were hosted by organisations including the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum and Archaeology Scotland, with accredited learning embedded directly within workplace activity. Alongside placements, trainees participated in mentoring, leadership training, and community-facing heritage activity designed to reach first-time and underrepresented audiences. Senior Volunteer Leadership placements were also piloted to strengthen longer-term organisational capacity.

Chapter 3: Programme Delivery in Practice

3.1 Learning Through Work

Trainees undertook SVQ Level 3 qualifications alongside practical work placements, ensuring that formal learning and day-to-day activity reinforced each other. This integration allowed participants to develop technical competence, sector knowledge, and professional confidence simultaneously. Leadership development, mentoring, and peer learning complemented formal training, creating a rounded development pathway rather than a purely academic or workplace-based experience.



Example of the SVQ training progress dashboard used to monitor trainee learning and assessment in the SQA SVQ in Museums and Galleries Practice (SCQF Level 7), delivered through the OneFile learning platform.

3.2 The Role of Programme Infrastructure

Programme managers played a central coordinating role, supporting trainees, maintaining partnerships, and ensuring quality across placements. This infrastructure proved critical to delivery, providing continuity, problem-solving support, and a consistent point of contact for all stakeholders. Host organisations contributed supervision, projects, and operational learning opportunities, while also benefiting from trainee insight and capacity. Partners received support in embedding inclusive practice, strengthening organisational learning alongside workforce development.

3.3 Outreach and Engagement

Programme opportunities were promoted through community radio, social media, information sessions, and established community networks. This approach broadened access

beyond traditional sector channels and ensured that recruitment reached individuals who might not otherwise consider heritage careers. Community engagement activity undertaken by trainees further strengthened institutional relationships with local communities, demonstrating heritage's role in wellbeing, participation, and cultural connection.



Martin Lawson-Osagie leading a learning session with primary school pupils at Lauriston Castle, Edinburgh, exploring historical domestic life and comparing past and present household technologies as part of his traineeship with Museums and Galleries Edinburgh.

3.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

An external evaluator, Learning Link Scotland, developed a Theory of Change framework to guide monitoring. Surveys, interviews, and reflective learning sessions provided structured evidence throughout delivery, enabling the programme to evolve responsively rather than relying on end-stage evaluation alone. This continuous feedback loop supported adaptive management, strengthened accountability, and ensured that learning informed ongoing practice.



Martin Lawson-Osagie delivering a museum tour presentation to colleagues at Museums and Galleries Edinburgh as part of his SVQ assessment in Museum and Gallery Practice.

Chapter 4: Conclusion: Key Themes, Strengths and Lessons for Future Delivery

4.1 What Worked Well

Paid placements proved essential in widening access, while community-led recruitment built trust and confidence among applicants. Strong partnerships enabled practical learning, and wraparound support improved retention and progression. At an individual level, participants developed confidence, employability, and leadership capability, gaining transferable skills in outreach, facilitation, funding awareness, and accessibility. Organisationally, host institutions introduced new programmes, strengthened inclusive practice, and developed staff mentoring capacity. At community level, engagement activity reduced isolation, created safe spaces, and enabled participants to act as co-facilitators of heritage activity.

4.2 Challenges and Learning

Several challenges emerged during the first year, including early misalignment between placement tasks and SVQ requirements, communication gaps between partners, and capacity pressures within smaller organisations. Trainees also identified gaps in funding literacy and digital skills. These experiences highlighted the importance of structured planning with hosts, early clarification of accreditation requirements, and realistic recognition of organisational constraints. Cultural change requires time, resource, and consistent commitment.

Unit ID	Unit Title	Credits	Learners	Actual Progress	Target Progress	Completion %	Target Date	Assessment Status	Assessment Status	Assessment Status
[CCSCH29]	Prepare Exhibitions or Displays [J88N04]	0	12	100%	31%	10/11/2025	27/11/2026	not signed off	not signed off	not signed off
[CCSCH31]	Provide Information on Specific Aspects of Cultural Heritage to Colleagues, Funders or the Public [J88604]	0	10	100%	31%	10/11/2025	27/11/2026	Not signed off	Not signed off	Not signed off
[CCSCH33]	Work Effectively in the Cultural Heritage Sector [J88204]	0	8	0%	31%	10/11/2025	27/11/2026	Not signed off	Not signed off	Not signed off
[CCSCV05]	Support the Organisation of Events and Exhibitions [J88L04]	0	8	0%	31%	10/11/2025	27/11/2026	Not signed off	Not signed off	Not signed off
[CCSCV015]	Contribute to the Care of Items within a Cultural Venue [J88704]	0	11	47%	31%	10/11/2025	27/11/2026	Not signed off	Not signed off	Not signed off
[CCSCV08]	Provide Visitors with General Assistance [J88504]	0	6	100%	31%	10/11/2025	27/11/2026	Not signed off	Not signed off	Not signed off

■ bar indicates your actual progress achieved (no bar = no progress)
 ■ bar indicates your target progress based on the expected completion date
 *s signify that the Internal Quality Assurer has sampled the Unit as part of a quality checking process

Detailed view of unit progress within the SQA SVQ in Museums and Galleries Practice, showing competency-based learning outcomes, assessment progress, and expected completion timelines.

4.3 Key Lessons for Future Delivery

Three cross-cutting lessons emerged clearly from Year 1. First, flexibility is essential in managing placements and responding to participant needs. Second, trust between organisations and communities develops gradually and must be nurtured. Third, representation matters: visible inclusion within both programme teams and host institutions significantly strengthens engagement and confidence.

4.4 Best Practice Principles

Year 1 delivery confirmed that inclusive workforce programmes achieve the strongest results when they address both individual opportunity and institutional practice simultaneously. The following principles emerged as foundational to the effectiveness and transferability of the model developed by Next Step Initiative. The programme reinforced several principles for effective inclusive workforce initiatives. For instance, co-designing with communities ensures relevance and ownership. Fair payment removes barriers to participation. Training must address organisational practice as well as individual development, ensuring inclusion is embedded rather than superficial.

Based on the learning from the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme, the following principles represent key considerations for organisations seeking to design inclusive leadership development programmes in the heritage sector and beyond.

Principle 1: Co-design with communities, not consultation after the fact

Engagement is most effective when communities help shape programme design, delivery methods, and content from the outset. Co-design increases trust, relevance, and participation, while also shifting institutions from outreach models toward partnership models. Programmes that positioned trainees as cultural interpreters and connectors demonstrated stronger engagement outcomes and more sustainable relationships.

Principle 2: Pay participants fairly to remove structural barriers

Financial accessibility is not an enhancement but a prerequisite for inclusion. Paid placements, travel reimbursement, and bursary support enabled participation from individuals who could not otherwise enter the sector. Evidence from Year 1 confirms that payment signals institutional value, improves retention, and broadens the socio-economic diversity of applicants.

Principle 3: Embed participants in meaningful organisational work

Placements are most impactful when trainees contribute directly to core organisational activity rather than peripheral projects. Meaningful roles accelerate skills development, increase organisational benefit, and avoid the perception of symbolic inclusion. Alignment between SVQ requirements and daily responsibilities proved essential in strengthening both learning outcomes and host engagement.

Principle 4: Support organisations as actively as individuals

Inclusive workforce programmes cannot rely on trainee resilience alone. Host organisations require guidance, preparation, and ongoing support to embed participants effectively. Structured agreements, mentoring frameworks, and intermediary coordination reduced delivery risk and enabled institutions to move beyond intention toward demonstrable inclusive practice.

Principle 5: Treat mentoring as infrastructure, not an optional add-on

Multi-layered mentoring combining professional, pastoral, and organisational perspectives proved central to participant confidence and progression. Mentoring is most effective when structured, time-bound, and aligned to individual goals, while also offering psychological safety and independent support channels.

Principle 6: Recognise leadership as developmental, not positional

Year 1 demonstrated that leadership capability grows through responsibility, reflection, and supported practice rather than job titles alone. Providing opportunities to facilitate sessions, influence projects, and engage in decision-making built confidence more effectively than classroom-based leadership theory. Leadership programmes should therefore prioritise experiential learning alongside reflective support.

Principle 7: Invest in relationships, not just programme outputs

Sustainable impact depended on the strength of relationships between trainees, host organisations, community partners, and programme staff. Trust developed over time through consistent communication, visible responsiveness, and shared problem-solving. Programmes that prioritised relationship-building achieved stronger retention, deeper engagement, and longer-term organisational change.

4.5 Mentorship and Leadership Support

Structured mentoring proved central to participant development. The March–May mentoring cycle focused on employability, confidence, and career planning through time-bound, goal-oriented sessions. Leadership support sessions complemented this work with practical learning around communication, decision-making, problem-solving, and resilience. Evidence from Year 1 shows that leadership development must recognise emotional labour and wellbeing as core competencies, particularly for emerging leaders navigating historically exclusionary sectors.



Susannah Cavil, now a manager at Museums and Galleries Edinburgh, reflecting on her experience as a former participant of the Heritage Leadership Programme and its role in supporting career pathways for people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the heritage sector.

4.6 Summary: Key Themes, Strengths, and Lessons for Future Delivery

Access and Representation

The programme successfully increased access for Black and Minority Ethnic participants, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted outreach and inclusive recruitment practices. Going forward, this model continues to meet a clear need, highlighting ongoing demand for structured pathways into heritage and cultural careers.

Support and Communication

Strong on-site support ensured trainees were confident and well-guided throughout their placements. Future iterations should focus on improving structured communication across partners to maintain clarity and alignment at all stages of delivery.

Training and Structure

Trainees benefited from valuable behind-the-scenes exposure to museum operations and practical learning opportunities. Enhanced alignment between workplace activity and accredited learning modules will strengthen the connection between practical experience and formal qualifications.

Programme Delivery

Participants gained increased skills, confidence, and leadership capability. Introducing structured peer networks and targeted leadership support will help consolidate these gains and accelerate professional growth.

Institutional Integration

Partner organisations demonstrated readiness and willingness to continue engagement, illustrating the programme’s positive influence on institutional practice. Earlier engagement in recruitment and planning will further strengthen this integration and ensure smooth programme delivery.

Sustainability and Planning

Growing sector interest underscores the programme’s potential for long-term impact. Clearer progression routes for participants post-placement will support sustainable workforce development and ensure lasting benefits beyond the programme cycle.

Table 1: Learning Themes and Forward-Looking Insights

Theme	Strengths	Learning and Forward Actions
Access and Representation	Increased access for BME participants	Continued need and demand for this model
Support and Communication	Strong on-site support	Improve structured communication across partners
Training and Structure	Valuable museum exposure	Better alignment between work and learning modules

Programme Delivery	Increased skills and confidence	Introduce structured peer and leadership support
Institutional Integration	Partner readiness to continue	Earlier engagement in recruitment and planning
Sustainability and Planning	Sector interest growing	Clearer progression routes post-placement

Appendices

Appendix A – Case Study: Lababa Naqvi

Case Study: Lababa Naqvi – Heritage Leadership Traineeship at David Livingstone Birthplace Museum

Background

Lababa Naqvi is a freelance community artist and storyteller originally from Pakistan, living in Scotland for eight years. Prior to her placement, she had extensive experience working in community settings, particularly empowering women through creative practice, and was associated with the Village Storytelling Centre. While she brought strong community-facing expertise, she had limited formal experience in museum operations.



Lababa Naqvi facilitating a storytelling session with women from the local community as part of engagement activities at the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum.

Motivation for Joining

Lababa joined the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme driven by a long-standing interest in museums and the opportunity to gain practical experience paired with an accredited qualification. She sought to understand behind-the-scenes museum operations and develop professional skills within a heritage setting. Lababa explained that:

“This qualification has helped me develop a deeper understanding of how museums are run and how they work behind the scenes.”

Role and Key Activities

During her placement at the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum, Lababa undertook a multi-faceted role, including:

- Community outreach and engagement
- Arts, crafts, and storytelling facilitation
- Inclusive interpretation and accessibility
- Funding applications and project delivery

A central focus of her placement was leading Livingstone’s Green Connections, a community-led project integrating creative activity, wellbeing, and heritage engagement.

Decolonisation and Inclusion Focus

Lababa’s work embedded inclusive and decolonising practices, including:

- Storytelling-led interpretation centering lived experience
- Translation of museum labels to improve access for non-English speakers
- Creating welcoming spaces for diverse communities, including museum newcomers
- Supporting participants to progress from attendees to co-facilitators

Lababa asserts that:

“Museums are not just places where objects are displayed. They are community hubs where people connect and engage with heritage in meaningful ways.”

Skills Developed

Through the programme, Lababa strengthened:

- Leadership and facilitation skills
- Community engagement and outreach
- Funding application and sustainability planning
- Cross-cultural communication
- Inclusive museum interpretation

Lababa explained that:

“My outreach skills have been significantly developed, and gaining experience in funding applications has been extremely valuable for my professional growth.”

Support Received

Lababa benefited from comprehensive support, including:

- One-to-one mentoring from the Project Manager
- Day-to-day guidance from museum colleagues and supervisors
- Peer learning through cohort sessions
- Embedded feedback and reflective practice

Lababa further explained that:

“My colleagues and manager have been incredibly supportive. Everyone brings different skills and perspectives, which helped me learn and grow.”

Impact

Individual Impact

- Increased leadership confidence and professional identity
- Clear progression pathway within the museum and cultural sector
- Greater understanding of museums as dynamic, community-facing institutions

Organisational Impact

- Delivery of a successful, ongoing community-led project
- Improved accessibility through translated labels and inclusive engagement
- Increased participation from underrepresented communities

Community Impact

- Creation of safe, supportive spaces promoting wellbeing through arts and storytelling
- Positive mental health and social outcomes for participants experiencing isolation
- Empowerment of participants to become facilitators and leaders

One of the participants explained that: *“The sessions gave me strength and hope. They helped me step out of my comfort zone and feel connected again.”* – Community participant feedback

Learning and Recommendations

Lababa highlighted the value of the programme while suggesting potential enhancements:

- Additional short courses on funding, particularly large grant applications
- Increased technical skills training, such as social media management

Legacy and Sustainability

Lababa intends to continue integrating storytelling and creative practice across museum settings. Her work provides a replicable model for inclusive, community-led engagement that can be embedded across the heritage sector.

“Storytelling and art are powerful ways to make museums accessible, engaging, and welcoming for diverse audiences.”

Alignment with National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcomes

- **A more inclusive heritage sector:** Increased representation and culturally responsive practice
- **Skills development:** Leadership, project delivery, and funding literacy

- **Community engagement and wellbeing:** Heritage as a tool for connection and resilience
- **Sustainability:** Projects designed for continuation beyond the training period



Lababa Naqvi engaging with museum collections as part of her professional development during the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme.

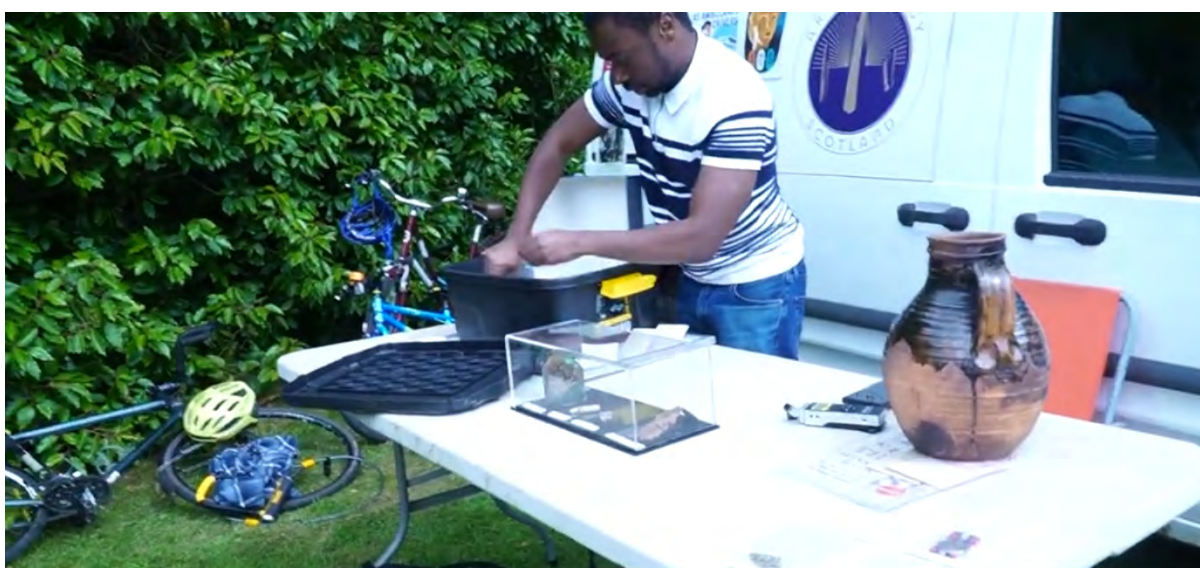
Appendix B – Case Study: Joshua Ogunmola

Heritage Leadership Case Study: Joshua Ogunmola

Placement: Archaeology Scotland

Background

Joshua Ogunmola joined the programme with a strong interest in archaeology and public heritage engagement. His placement combined practical fieldwork with public-facing facilitation, enabling him to develop confidence, leadership skills, and sector-ready experience.



Joshua Ogunmola preparing archaeological artefacts for a public engagement activity with Archaeology Scotland.

Placement Context

- Outdoor archaeological fieldwork on a historic site near Edinburgh, stewarded by Archaeology Scotland.
- Site originally acquired in 1794, now used for supervised excavation, structured training, and public engagement.
- Attracts a diverse mix of first-time visitors and returning participants, often under challenging outdoor conditions.

Role and Key Activities

During public archaeology sessions, Joshua:

- Explained the historical significance of the site and its long-term land use
- Guided participants through excavation techniques
- Interpreted soil layers, including clay deposits, and their archaeological meaning
- Supported artefact handling and interpretation
- Communicated the importance of archaeological ethics and context preservation.

Joshua demonstrated confidence answering questions, encouraging curiosity, and making complex archaeological concepts accessible to all participants.



Joshua Ogunmola engaging participants in a hands-on archaeology activity as part of community outreach work.

Public Engagement and Inclusion

- First-time participants reported excitement and enjoyment
- Returning participants valued repeat engagement
- Hands-on artefact displays encouraged tactile learning
- Differentiated genuine artefacts from replicas (including WWII-inspired materials) to protect heritage while remaining educational

Joshua's approach ensured learning was accessible and engaging while promoting ethical stewardship of archaeological objects.



Community participants taking part in an archaeological excavation activity facilitated through Archaeology Scotland's public engagement programme

Skills Developed

- Public speaking and group facilitation
- Archaeological fieldwork techniques
- Heritage interpretation and storytelling
- Ethical practice in archaeology, including context recording
- Confidence in leading group learning experiences

Impact

Individual Impact

- Increased confidence in public-facing leadership roles
- Strengthened communication and facilitation skills
- Applied archaeological knowledge in real-world settings

Organisational Impact

- Enhanced delivery of public archaeology sessions
- Strengthened capacity for community-facing programmes
- Demonstrated the value of trainee-led engagement activities

Community Impact

- Made archaeology approachable and accessible for new audiences
- Improved understanding of archaeological processes and ethics
- Encouraged curiosity and repeat participation in heritage activities

Strategic Value

Joshua's placement exemplifies:

- Effective work-based learning within a heritage context
- Clear transfer of knowledge from trainee to public
- Strong partnership between NSI and Archaeology Scotland
- Widening participation in archaeology through structured, supervised experience

Without structured placements like this, emerging heritage professionals would have limited access to hands-on, public-facing archaeological experience.

Alignment with National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcomes

- Skills development: Practical archaeological, communication, and leadership skills
- Heritage interpretation: Site history and excavation processes made accessible to the public
- Learning about heritage: Participants gained new understanding of archaeology and historical context
- Inclusive heritage sector: First-time participants welcomed into archaeological practice

Appendix C – Case Study: David Livingstone Birthplace Museum

Host Organisation: David Livingstone Birthplace Museum (David Livingstone Trust)

Background

The David Livingstone Birthplace Museum partnered with Next Step Initiative (NSI) to host trainees and senior volunteers through the Heritage Leadership Programme. NSI's support was described as critical to the museum's ability to deliver placements successfully. Sandra Wilson, the museum's Director, emphasised:

“Having that reassurance that there is support in the background is incredibly important. This is not something you can do in isolation.”

The programme aimed to enhance organisational capacity, embed inclusive practice, and develop sustainable community engagement.

Programme Delivery and Organisational Integration

Trainees were fully embedded within core museum operations, ensuring their contributions were meaningful rather than peripheral. Their work directly influenced collections interpretation, programme delivery, and decision-making processes. One trainee, for example, completed her SVQ qualification early because her assessed work aligned closely with museum practice:

“Her contribution was meaningful to the organisation, rather than being something detached from our core work.”

NSI provided essential infrastructure to enable:

- Smooth onboarding of trainees
- Problem-solving support during placement delivery
- Confidence to host and sustain placements
- Mitigation of organisational risk

Sandra Wilson reflecting on the broader value of trainee perspectives explained:

“What the trainees brought to us in terms of perspective has been immensely valuable. They encouraged us to look at things differently, sometimes even taking us in directions we may not have considered otherwise.”

Impact on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI)

The programme enabled the museum to move from intention to authentic inclusion. Trainees acted as bridges between the museum and underrepresented communities, fostering sustained engagement with marginalised groups.

“Having NSI trainees embedded within our staff has enabled us to engage more meaningfully and authentically with diverse communities.”

This engagement strengthened the museum’s reputation as a welcoming and inclusive space for all visitors.



Sandra Lawson, Director of Operations and Engagement at the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum, discussing the impact of the Heritage Leadership Training Programme on museum engagement and operations.

Community Engagement and Legacy

Trainee-led initiatives established during the programme continue to operate today, delivered by museum volunteers. These workshops created safe, accessible spaces addressing social isolation and loneliness while promoting wellbeing. According to Sandra:

“One of those workshops is still running today. That’s thanks to the strong foundation she built.”

Senior Volunteer Leadership Placement

Building on the trainee placements, the Senior Volunteer Leadership Placement supports long-term community engagement, builds organisational capacity, and introduces new partnerships through volunteer networks.



Lord Mensah, Senior Volunteer Leader at the David Livingstone Birthplace Museum, contributing to community engagement and partnership activities through the Senior Volunteer Leadership Placement.

Reflecting further, Sandra explained:

“It feels like the next level for us. The opportunity to sit down and explore how we can influence different parts of our community is extremely valuable.”

Strategic Outcomes

The partnership between NSI and the museum delivered measurable organisational change:

- Embedded sustainable DEI practices
- Improved community engagement and participation
- Reframed collections and programmes through diverse perspectives
- Created long-term, replicable initiatives that continue beyond the placement period

NSI’s specialist infrastructure was essential in ensuring the success of these outcomes, allowing the museum to integrate trainees into meaningful roles safely and effectively.

Alignment with National Lottery Heritage Fund Outcomes

- A more inclusive heritage sector: Inclusion embedded across organisational practice
- People develop skills: Trainees delivered leadership and community-facing work

- Heritage better explained: Collections and programmes interpreted through new perspectives
- Sustainability: Activities and workshops continue beyond the placement period

This case study demonstrates that NSI-supported placements do more than develop individual trainees, they transform host organisations, embed inclusive practice, and deliver long-lasting benefits to communities.

Appendix D – Replication Toolkit (Non-Heritage Sectors)

This appendix provides practical implementation guidance for organisations seeking to adopt the Next Step Initiative Leadership Traineeship Model across finance, health, arts, and local authority contexts. It outlines the structural conditions required for successful adoption, including organisational readiness, governance arrangements, partnership design, and resourcing considerations, while also offering step-by-step support to help delivery partners move confidently from commitment to implementation.

Designed for commissioners, strategic leaders, and delivery organisations alike, the guidance supports adaptation across sectors while maintaining the model's evidence-based principles and securing measurable workforce and inclusion outcomes. Building on the findings, evidence, and delivery experience presented in the main report, this appendix translates learning from the heritage context into a practical framework for cross-sector adoption, enabling organisations to move from insight to action while preserving the programme's core commitments to equity, access, and leadership development.

Purpose of This Toolkit

This toolkit has been developed to support organisations outside the heritage sector to adopt and implement the Next Step Initiative Leadership Traineeship Model in a way that is structured yet adaptable, equity-led rather than symbolic, and designed to deliver impact beyond a single funding cycle. It is intended for use across a range of sectors, including finance and professional services, health and social care, arts and cultural organisations, and local authorities or wider public services. The guidance recognises that organisational contexts will differ, and therefore emphasises principles and processes that can be tailored while maintaining the integrity of the model. The toolkit operates on the assumption that host organisations are committed to meaningful inclusion and possess at least a baseline level of organisational capacity to support trainees or senior volunteers through supervision, learning opportunities, and structured development pathways.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed as a practical implementation guide rather than a theoretical framework. Organisations are encouraged to use it iteratively, moving between sections as planning, delivery, and reflection evolve. While the stages are presented sequentially, in practice many will overlap, particularly where partnership development, governance arrangements, and workforce planning are being established simultaneously.

The toolkit can be used at three levels. At a strategic level, senior leaders and boards can use it to assess organisational readiness, clarify objectives, and determine how the traineeship model aligns with workforce development, inclusion, and community engagement priorities. At an operational level, programme managers and HR or learning teams can use it to design placements, mentoring structures, and evaluation approaches.

At a partnership level, it can support conversations with community organisations, training providers, and delivery partners, including the Next Step Initiative, to ensure shared expectations and accountability. Organisations are encouraged to begin with the readiness checks before moving into programme design. This ensures that leadership commitment, safeguarding arrangements, supervision capacity, and learning structures are in place before recruitment begins. Once implementation is underway, the later sections of the toolkit can be used to review progress, strengthen practice, and plan for sustainability beyond the initial cohort. Used in this way, the toolkit supports not only programme replication but also organisational learning, helping institutions embed inclusive workforce development as a long-term strategic capability rather than a short-term project.

2. The NSI Model – Core Principles (Non-Negotiables)

Before replicating, organisations must commit to the following principles:

2.1 Equity Before Access

The model does **not** simply place individuals into organisations.

It:

- Removes structural barriers
- Provides wraparound support
- Aligns learning with real work

2.2 Paid or Properly Supported Roles

Traineeships must be:

- Paid roles or

- Properly resourced volunteer leadership placements with clear outcomes

2.3 Embedded, Not Peripheral

Participants:

- Work on *core organisational priorities*
- Are not confined to side projects or observation-only roles

2.4 Delivery Infrastructure Matters

A central coordinating body (like NSI) is essential to:

- Reduce risk for hosts
- Support participants
- Maintain quality and consistency

3. Step-by-Step Replication Framework

Module 1: Purpose and Strategic Fit: Define the Workforce Gap (Sector-Specific)

Audience: Board, Senior Leadership, Funders

Start with a **clear problem statement**:

- Who is underrepresented?
- At what level (entry, middle, leadership)?
- What skills or progression barriers exist?
- What workforce or leadership gap are we trying to solve?
- Why is a traditional recruitment or internship model insufficient?
- How does this programme align with organisational strategy and EDI commitments

Examples:

- Finance: Lack of ethnic minority representation in compliance, leadership, or governance roles
- Health: Underrepresentation in management, commissioning, or clinical leadership
- Arts: Freelance precarity and lack of progression into decision-making roles
- Local Authorities: Limited diversity in policy, planning, and senior officer roles

Output: A one-page “Why This Programme Exists” statement.

Module 2: Role and Placement Design: Design the Placement or Leadership Role

Audience: HR, Line Managers, Delivery Partner

Required Components:

- Paid trainee or supported leadership role
- Clear responsibilities tied to organisational priorities
- Learning outcomes mapped to real work

Each placement must have:

- A clear role description
- Defined learning outcomes
- A named supervisor or mentor
- Real responsibility (scaled to experience)

Table 2: Adaptation Examples

Sector	Role Focus
Finance	Risk, governance, ESG, community finance
Health	Service improvement, patient engagement, workforce planning
Arts	Programme production, fundraising, access and participation
Local Authorities	Policy support, community engagement, regeneration

Assumption: Roles can be adjusted as learning progresses (flexibility is a strength).

Good Practice:

- Avoid observational-only roles
- Build flexibility into role scope

Module 3: Learning and Accreditation Alignment: Align Learning With Real Work

Audience: Training Leads, External Providers

Avoid parallel systems.

Learning should be:

- Evidence-based
- Directly generated from day-to-day work
- Formally recognised where possible

Options include:

- Accredited qualifications
- In-house leadership frameworks/pathways
- Sector-recognised competencies/ Sector competency frameworks

Critical Principle: Learning evidence must be generated through *day-to-day work*, not parallel assignments. This alignment was critical to success in the heritage programme and is a replication priority.

Module 4: Structured Support and Safeguarding: Build in Structured Support

Audience: Delivery Partner, Supervisors

Support must be planned, not reactive.

Minimum support structure/model:

- Weekly or fortnightly 1:1 check-ins
- Group peer-support and learning sessions
- Clear escalation routes for challenges
- Pastoral and professional development support

These prevents attrition, isolation, burnout, and loss of confidence, especially for those navigating unfamiliar professional environments.

Module 5: Organisational Learning and Change: Embed Organisational Learning

Audience: Senior Leadership, HR, Boards

Replication fails if learning stays with the trainee.

Mechanisms:

- Reflection sessions with host teams
- Feedback loops into policy and practice (leadership and HR)
- Documentation of changed practice

Outcome: Organisation changes alongside the participant.

Assumption: Host organisations are willing to change, not just host.

Module 6: Introduce Senior Volunteer or Ambassador Roles (Optional but Powerful)

Senior volunteers:

- Act as bridges between organisations and communities
- Provide strategic insight and networks
- Strengthen sustainability and trust

Sector Adaptations

- Finance: Community finance ambassadors
- Health: Patient voice or community health champions
- Arts: Cultural connectors and audience development leads
- Local Authorities: Community advisors linked to policy or regeneration

Module 7: Evaluation, Evidence and Legacy: Capture Impact and Evidence

Audience: Funders, Strategy Teams

Evidence should cover:

- Individual development
- Organisational change
- Community impact
- Legacy and continuation

Types of Evidence/Tools:

- Case studies
- Short interviews
- Before/after practice reviews
- Light-touch metrics (retention, progression, engagement)
- Organisational change examples

Legacy Focus: Sustainability beyond the funded period.

4. Model at a Glance

Stage	Components
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding • Host organisations • Coordinating body • Trainees / volunteers
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paid placements • Leadership development • Mentoring and support • Community engagement

Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skilled, confident participants • Stronger, more inclusive organisations • Improved community trust and access
Legacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workforce diversification • Sustainable programmes • Replicable leadership pipelines

Table 3: Model



5. Risk and Mitigation (Cross-Sector)

Table 4: Risk and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Tokenistic placements	Clear role design + central oversight
Participant attrition	Structured support + flexible learning
Host capacity strain	Delivery partner support
Misalignment with qualifications	Early co-design
Resistance to change	Leadership buy-in from outset

6. What Makes This Model Different

The Next Step Initiative Leadership Traineeship Model is not simply a placement scheme, it is a systemic approach designed to drive meaningful organisational change while developing individual leaders. Unlike traditional traineeships, the model integrates workforce development with community impact, ensuring that benefits extend beyond participants to strengthen institutional practice, inclusion, and engagement. Its effectiveness has been

demonstrated across multiple organisations, and it is intentionally designed to be adapted thoughtfully to different contexts, rather than copied superficially, preserving its evidence-based principles while allowing flexibility for sector-specific needs.

7. Board-Level Replication Checklist and Decision Tool

Can We Replicate This Model: Strategic Readiness Checklist

This decision framework enabling Boards to assess readiness, risk, and strategic fit for adopting the NSI model. Before approval, Boards should confirm:

- Clear workforce problem identified
- Leadership buy-in confirmed
- Senior leadership sponsor identified
- Budget secured for paid roles or supported placements
- Delivery partner or internal coordinator in place
- Evaluation plan agreed
- Willingness to adapt organisational practice
- Sustainability beyond pilot considered

Capacity and Risk Check

- Line managers have time to supervise
- Support structures are planned
- Risks identified with mitigation strategies

Impact and Legacy Test

- Success measures agreed
- Learning will inform wider organisational change
- Continuation beyond pilot considered

Board Decision

- Proceed to co-design phase
- Proceed with pilot cohort
- Do not proceed (with rationale)

8. Final Note on Adaptation

This model is most effective when treated as a strategic change programme, not a short-term placement scheme. This model is sector-agnostic but values-driven. Replication succeeds when organisations keep the principles constant while adapting the mechanics to their sector.

Appendix E- Scalability and Transferability (Funder, Board and Partner Prospectus)

This annex sets out the strategic rationale for scaling the Heritage Leader Traineeship Programme nationally and transferring the model across sectors. It demonstrates how the programme delivers inclusive leadership development, workforce diversification, and sustainable community impact. Its core components, paid placements, leadership mentoring, community engagement, and organisational support are sector-agnostic. The Heritage Leader Traineeship Programme is intentionally designed to be sector-agnostic. Its core components can be adapted beyond the heritage sector to other contexts, ensuring maximum scalability.

The model can be adapted for:

- Finance and professional services
- Health and social care
- Arts and creative industries
- Local authorities and public bodies

This flexibility demonstrates that the model is not limited to heritage organisations but can be applied wherever leadership development, workforce diversification, and inclusive engagement are priorities.

This document provides three aligned but distinct assets derived from the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme:

1. **A Funder Annex** – evidencing scalability, transferability, and value for money
2. **A Board Pack Insert** – enabling strategic decision-making at governance level
3. **A Partner Prospectus** – inviting adoption across finance, health, arts, and local authority sectors and Emphasises NSI as delivery partner and model custodian

All assets foreground Next Step Initiative (NSI) as the delivery partner and guardian of programme integrity. Assumptions underpinning scalability and transferability are explicitly stated to maintain transparency.

Strategic Alignment with NLHF Priorities

The programme supports NLHF outcomes in multiple ways:

- **Inclusive Heritage / Workforce Development:** Expands leadership opportunities to underrepresented groups

- **Skills Development:** Provides accredited leadership training, mentoring, and sector-ready placements
- **Community Engagement and Wellbeing:** Builds sustainable programmes that benefit participants and wider communities
- **Sustainability and Replicability:** Creates leadership pipelines transferable across sectors and geographies

The Heritage Leader Traineeship Programme is a *proven, flexible, and scalable model*. Its design ensures that it can:

- Deliver measurable impact in heritage and non-heritage sectors
- Support strategic workforce development and inclusion agendas
- Be replicated nationally, contributing to NLHF priorities while maintaining quality and value

NSI's role as model custodian ensures consistency, oversight, and ongoing refinement as the programme scales.

PART A: FUNDER ANNEX

Scalability and Transferability

Purpose of this Annex

This annex demonstrates that the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme is:

- **Scalable** – capable of expansion in size, geography, and sector
- **Transferable** – adaptable beyond heritage into other public, private, and third-sector contexts
- **Value-led** – delivering measurable organisational and community outcomes alongside individual skills development

Core Model (What Scales)

At its core, the model consists of five transferable components:

1. **Paid Leadership Traineeships** embedded within host organisations
2. **Structured external support** provided by NSI (coaching, safeguarding, quality assurance)
3. **Real organisational work**, not shadowing or observation
4. **Community-facing outcomes** aligned to organisational purpose
5. **Legacy mechanisms** ensuring work continues beyond the placement

These components are sector-agnostic.

Evidence of Scalability (Within Heritage)

The programme has already demonstrated internal scalability through:

- Multiple host organisations (national museums, specialist heritage bodies)
- Multiple participant pathways (trainees, senior volunteers, boards)
- Replicable structures (SVQ alignment, mentoring, steering groups)

Growth has occurred *without dilution of quality*, indicating readiness for controlled expansion.

Evidence of Transferability (Beyond Heritage)

Qualitative and structural evidence confirms transferability:

- **Leadership skills developed** (decision-making, engagement, governance) are universal
- **Community engagement methods** translate directly to health, finance, arts, and civic contexts
- **Host organisation benefits** mirror those required in other sectors: trust, inclusion, workforce diversification, and innovation

Assumptions

This model assumes that:

- Host organisations are willing to integrate trainees into core work
- Senior leadership buy-in is secured at the outset
- External delivery support (NSI or equivalent) remains in place

Where these conditions are met, outcomes are repeatable.

Strategic Fit with Funder Priorities

The model aligns strongly with common public and philanthropic funding priorities:

- Workforce diversification
- Leadership development
- Institutional change (not token inclusion)
- Community benefit and wellbeing
- Long-term sustainability

Conclusion for Funders: This is a proven delivery model with clear evidence of scalability, low structural risk, and high return on investment.

PART B: BOARD PACK

Decision Brief: Should We Adopt This Model?

What This Is

A concise governance-level summary to support informed Board discussion and decision-making.

What the Model Offers

- A structured way to diversify leadership pipelines
- A low-risk, supported route to organisational culture change

- Tangible delivery outputs alongside leadership development

What the Model Is Not

- Not a short-term internship
- Not a standalone EDI initiative
- Not a passive learning programme

Strategic Questions for the Board

Boards should consider:

1. **Strategic Fit**
 - Does this align with our organisational mission and values?
2. **Capacity and Readiness**
 - Do we have senior staff able to mentor and integrate trainees?
3. **Risk Appetite**
 - Are we willing to allow emerging leaders to influence real work?
4. **Legacy Intent**
 - Are we committed to sustaining outcomes beyond the placement?

Risk and Mitigation (Board View)

Risk	Mitigation
Cultural resistance	External facilitation and senior sponsorship
Capacity strain	Time-bound placements with defined outputs
Reputational risk	NSI quality assurance and oversight

Board-Level Recommendation

Where organisational readiness exists, this model represents *a high-impact, controlled-risk investment in future leadership and organisational relevance.*

PART C: PARTNER PROSPECTUS

Adapting the Model Across Sectors: Why Partner with Next Step Initiative?

NSI is not simply a training provider. It is:

- A delivery partner
- A risk-holder
- A quality assurer
- A bridge between organisations and communities

Part C: A Partner/Sector Prospectus

The NSI Heritage Leadership Trainee programme demonstrates how inclusive leadership models can transform the heritage sector. This appendix highlights the key learning themes from Year 1 of the Heritage Leadership Traineeship Programme and outlines practical insights and actions to inform future delivery, strengthen impact, and support replication across sectors.

Finance and Financial Services

Sector Challenge: Low trust, limited leadership diversity, ESG pressure

Model Application:

- Leadership trainees embedded in ESG, governance, or community investment teams
- Focus on ethical decision-making, inclusion, and public accountability

Value: Improved credibility, talent pipeline diversification, stronger community legitimacy

Health and Social Care

Sector Challenge: Health inequalities, disengaged communities, staff burnout

Model Application:

- Trainees embedded in service design, engagement, or public health teams
- Emphasis on lived experience, trauma-informed leadership, trust-building

Value: More responsive services, improved patient engagement, leadership resilience

Arts and Creative Industries

Sector Challenge: Precarious careers, lack of progression for minoritised creatives

Model Application:

- Paid leadership placements bridging freelance practice and institutional leadership
- Focus on programming, access, and organisational governance

Value: Retention of diverse talent, sector sustainability, creative innovation

Local Authorities and Public Bodies

Sector Challenge: Community mistrust, leadership gaps, regeneration pressures

Model Application:

- Trainees embedded in regeneration, community planning, or policy teams
- Senior volunteer leaders acting as community ambassadors

Value: Stronger civic trust, inclusive policy design, leadership succession planning

Partnership Pathway

1. **Assess Readiness:** Evaluate organisational capacity, commitment to inclusion, and alignment with NSI programme principles.
2. **Co-Design Placements:** Collaborate with NSI to define meaningful roles, set learning objectives, and integrate community engagement.
3. **Deliver with Support:** Implement placements with NSI guidance, structured mentoring, and leadership development to ensure high-quality outcomes.
4. **Evaluate and Embed:** Capture results, refine practice, and establish sustainable pathways for trainees, volunteers, and organisational growth.

This is a flexible, adaptable framework, not a one-size-fits-all programme. NSI provides the expertise, oversight, and guidance needed to ensure fidelity, consistency, and lasting impact.

Next Steps – Engage and Activate

Partner with NSI to explore replication pilots, brief your Board, or launch new initiatives. Leverage NSI's support to mitigate risk, align operations, and embed inclusive workforce and leadership practices. **Contact Beltus Etchu:** Beltus@nextstepinitiative.org.uk

Appendix F –Policy Alignment Statement

1. Alignment with National Cultural Policy

The programme directly supports the ambitions of the Scottish Government’s *Culture Strategy for Scotland*, which identifies culture as central to community wellbeing, place-making, and inclusive growth. The strategy emphasises widening access to cultural participation, strengthening workforce pathways, and ensuring that cultural institutions reflect Scotland’s diversity. By creating paid leadership routes into heritage and embedding community engagement within institutional practice, the programme contributes to these national priorities while supporting long-term sector resilience.

2. Alignment with Heritage Workforce and Skills Priorities

The programme responds to the heritage workforce challenges identified by Historic Environment Scotland, including skills shortages, ageing workforce demographics, and the need to attract new entrants into conservation, interpretation, and engagement roles. By integrating work-based learning, mentoring, and leadership development, the programme supports Scotland’s Skills Investment Plan objectives to strengthen the talent pipeline and diversify entry routes into heritage careers.

3. Alignment with Museum Sector Strategy

The programme supports the strategic priorities set out by Museums Galleries Scotland, which highlight the importance of workforce development, leadership diversity, and community relevance for the long-term sustainability of Scotland’s museums. By embedding trainees in core organisational activity and supporting institutional learning, the programme contributes to sector goals around resilience, inclusion, and public value.

4. Alignment with Fair Work and Inclusive Growth

The programme reflects Scotland’s commitment to Fair Work principles by providing paid placements, structured mentoring, and clear progression pathways. This supports national priorities around tackling labour-market inequality, widening access to skilled employment, and ensuring that public investment in culture contributes to inclusive economic growth.

5. Alignment with National Lottery Heritage Funding Priorities

The programme aligns closely with the outcomes of the National Lottery Heritage Fund by:

- widening participation in heritage and cultural careers
- supporting people to develop heritage skills
- strengthening organisational sustainability
- building stronger relationships between heritage organisations and communities

Through its combined focus on workforce development, community engagement, and institutional change, the programme delivers outcomes that support both individual progression and long-term sector transformation.

6. Strategic Contribution

Overall, the programme contributes to Scotland's national objectives by:

- strengthening the cultural workforce pipeline
- improving equity of access to heritage careers
- supporting community-connected cultural institutions
- building sustainable leadership capacity within the sector

As such, it represents a delivery model that operationalises national policy commitments while providing measurable outcomes for funders, partners, and communities

Appendix G – Learning Link Scotland Evaluation

This appendix summarises the independent findings, thematic analysis, and recommendations produced by Learning Link Scotland in July 2025. An independent evaluation of the Heritage Leader Traineeship Programme was conducted in Year 1, drawing on feedback from trainees, NSI staff, and the Steering Group. The evaluation confirmed that the programme is effectively addressing structural and societal barriers faced by Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals seeking careers in museums and heritage, while also identifying opportunities to strengthen delivery, impact, and sustainability.

Key Context: Institutional and Sector Barriers

The evaluation highlighted persistent systemic challenges limiting BME participation in the heritage sector:

- Museum roles are often poorly advertised outside existing professional networks.
- BME candidates may feel underqualified or perceive museums as unwelcoming due to historic exclusion.
- Visible BME representation within staffing and leadership remains limited.

The Heritage Leader Traineeship Programme responds directly to these barriers by providing paid placements, structured mentoring, and community-connected experiences, enabling participants to build skills, confidence, and meaningful pathways into the sector.



Project Evaluation Report: Next Steps Initiative (NSI)

Heritage Leader Traineeship Programme

Project Focus: Supporting Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) individuals in museums through placements, training, community engagement, and professional development.

Evaluation Report

The following is the first year Project Evaluation Report compiled by Learning Link Scotland for Next Steps Initiative (NSI) and based on feedback from trainees, NSI staff, and the steering group. The report includes themes, analysis, and clear recommendations for future improvement.

1. Executive Summary

This evaluation compiles feedback from project trainees, NSI staff, and the project steering group. The overall evaluation reflects an appreciation for the opportunity and experience gained by the trainees and museums. However, some areas need to be improved around communication, support, structure, and clarity—particularly relating to roles, expectations, and SVQ requirements. This report outlines findings, identifies recurring themes, and recommends strategies for improvement.

2. Institutional and Societal Factors

Outside of this project, BME individuals have limited access to job opportunities in the museum sector because of a number of factors:

- Often museum jobs are not widely advertised or visible to those outside the sector or those within BME communities.
- Some trainees had previously felt underqualified or that museums “weren’t for them” due to systemic barriers.
- There is a general lack of visible BME representation in museums.

This project aims to address the above issues.

3. Key Findings by Stakeholder Group

A. Trainees' Views

Positive Experiences:

- Trainees gained insight into museum operations and behind-the-scenes work.
- They each expressed an improved understanding of exhibition design, community engagement, and collections management.
- They felt more confident and better equipped to apply for jobs in the museum sector.
- They received strong support from museum managers and colleagues and experienced a welcoming work environment.
- The trainees benefitted from skills development, especially in public engagement, and outreach.

Challenges:

- Programme lacked clarity at times, with confusion about institutional expectations and module alignment.
- There was not always a strong connection between learning modules and the practical work of placements; some trainees had to redo assignments.

B. NSI Staff Views

Strengths:

- The programme successfully introduces BME individuals to museum careers. This comes from years of experience by Next Step Initiative on delivering similar programmes.
- Communication with trainees on a one-on-one basis is working.
- MGS (Museums Galleries Scotland) support has been positive for the project.
- Regular evaluation meetings help monitor trainee development.
- The initiative has begun bridging the gap between museums and underrepresented communities.

Challenges:

- There has been some difficulty organising steering group meetings due to scheduling conflicts.
- Review senior volunteer leader’s placement, as this presently is not working

C. Steering Group Views

Positive Outcomes:

- Supervisors recognize the value trainees bring to the museum service, they offer fresh perspectives and dedication to the role.
- There is an ongoing commitment to the project alongside a willingness to host trainees again exists, contingent on continuing improvements in communication.
- There have been some unanticipated outcomes, such as skill development among existing museum staff in supporting the trainees.

Challenges:

- Initial expectations around the trainees being able to step into leadership roles proved a challenge; some trainees may have had leadership experience but lacked the sector knowledge needed to take on such a role within the museum service.
- Placements often had to be restructured mid-way as practical working experiences did not always match the SVQ requirements.
- Communication between NSI and the other parties could have been improved.
- All parties would appreciate clear guidance on SVQ requirements.

3. Thematic Analysis

Theme	Strengths	The way forward
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Access and Representation	The project opens doors for BME individuals, addressed diversity gaps	There is an ongoing need and support for projects of this nature
Support and Communication	Trainees experienced supportive managers and colleagues	Communication between NSI and other parties needs improved, particularly around planning quarterly meetings for the year, joint monthly meeting between host organisations and assessors.
Training and Structure	Valuable exposure to museum operations	Steps need to be taken to avoid misalignment between work and study modules and there needs greater clarity about leadership expectations
Programme Delivery	Trainees gained skills and confidence	There is a need for ongoing, structured peer support, and leadership development
Institutional Integration	The museums are ready to continue the partnership	Continue to engage institutions earlier in the recruitment and placement process for better alignment and preparedness.
Sustainability and Planning	Interest in expanding programme impact	Requires ongoing and new partnerships and well-defined next steps for career progression post-placement

4. Recommendations

A. Programme Structure and Clarity

- Make certain leadership component aligns with trainee experience level; consider replacing with community engagement or project coordination focus.

B. Communication and Support

- Maintain regular check-ins and peer-support networks for both trainees and supervisors.

C. Training and Development

- Ensure greater understanding and integration between practical placements and academic modules.

D. Recruitment and Outreach

- Clarify legal requirements (e.g., work status, visas) during recruitment.

E. Institutional Partnership

- Continue to engage institutions earlier in the recruitment and placement process for better alignment and preparedness.

F. Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regularly gather feedback from all stakeholders and publish brief progress reports
- Capture success stories and case studies to demonstrate impact and attract new partners or funders.

5. Conclusion

The Next Step Initiative with her experience and traction, has opened important pathways for BME individuals into museum careers, fostering confidence, skills, and representation. However, its long-term success depends on addressing gaps in structure, communication, and alignment. With improved support mechanisms, and realistic expectations, the initiative can continue to grow into a powerful force for diversity and equity in the museum sector.

Report prepared by Jackie Howie, CEO, Learning Link Scotland

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Date: July 2025

Programme Team



Beltus Ojong Etchu (CEO)

Beltus Ojong Etchu holds a BA (Hons) in Business Accounting with Distinction and an MSc in International Finance Management. He is the Chief Executive Officer of Next Step Initiative, where he leads initiatives focused on enterprise development, community empowerment, and international trade engagement.

He is also a Co-Founder, Fellow, and Director of the Centre for African Policy Development and Research Scotland, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (RSA).

With over 17 years of international business experience, Beltus specialises in UK–Africa trade and investment relations, facilitating strategic engagement between businesses, investors, and African diplomatic missions in the United Kingdom. He also advises organisations across the financial services, technology, capacity building, and energy sectors on international markets and Africa-focused investment opportunities.



Dr Festus Olatunde Ogunmola (Vice Chair, NSI)

Dr Festus Olatunde Ogunmola is a financial strategist, governance expert, and international development leader with over 30 years of global experience in finance, banking, and risk management across the United Kingdom and international markets. A Chartered Accountant and member of the Business Continuity Institute (UK), he has held senior roles with organisations including Barclays, Barclaycard, Royal Bank of Scotland, and Lloyds Banking Group, and has led major compliance and financial governance initiatives across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa.

He serves on the boards of E-Tranzact UK and Xcel Digital Bank and is Co-Founder of the Association of Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning of Nigeria (AAIMLON). Dr Ogunmola is also Vice Chairman of Next Step Initiative, President of the Scottish Council of African Churches, and CEO of Greatway Foundation, a Scottish charity focused on youth empowerment and social inclusion. He holds a PhD in Finance and an MBA from the University of Manchester.



Rizwan Ahmed

Rizwan Ahmed is a Project Manager at NSI with over 30 years of experience working in the field of race equality. He has a long-standing commitment to promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion, particularly within Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities. Throughout his career, Rizwan has managed and supported a range of community development and advocacy projects, including Awaz – Voice of the Community, the Ethnic Minority Enterprise Centre, and Ethnic Minority Advocacy Services. His work has focused on empowering communities, supporting economic participation, and ensuring that ethnic minority voices are represented in decision-making processes. In addition to project management, Rizwan has a strong track record of building and nurturing strategic partnerships with delivery partners, community organisations, and funding bodies. His collaborative approach has helped strengthen networks and improve outcomes for diverse communities. Rizwan has also served on the boards of several community organisations and has actively participated in various working groups and forums addressing racial equality and social justice. Through these roles, he continues to contribute to policy discussions and initiatives aimed at tackling racial inequality and promoting inclusive communities.



Ibrahim Aleshinloye-Abass

Ibrahim Aleshinloye-Abass is a creative media practitioner and project management professional with over 20 years of experience supporting ethnic minority organisations across Scotland. His work brings together project leadership, community development, and creative communication to help organisations plan, deliver, and promote impactful community initiatives. Over the past two decades, Ibrahim has been involved in the planning and management of a range of community-led projects across African and Caribbean networks, including collaborations with organisations such as the African Caribbean Women’s Association, Yoruba Community Scotland, Nigerian Community Scotland, and other community groups. His work has contributed to initiatives focused on cultural engagement, African health and wellbeing, community events, and capacity-building programmes that strengthen community participation and representation.

Ibrahim currently serves as Project Manager at Next Step Initiative, where he supports the delivery of programmes such as the Heritage Leadership Programme, helping create pathways for individuals from ethnic minority backgrounds to access opportunities and leadership roles within Scotland’s heritage sector. Alongside his project management work, Ibrahim has extensive experience in creative media and storytelling, supporting organisations to document their work, communicate their impact, and amplify community voices.

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