Review and evaluation of the Project Ark Pilot 2018-2020: summary

Project Ark Pilot participants and stakeholders in their own words

It made us wake up and see the amount of material we had and the gaps in the records.

Museum volunteer, 50 Objects

Working with volunteers two days a week was a key element. It was important for slowly building both skills and trust.

Pilot team member

Keeping taonga in a box does not keep them 'warm'.

Iwi focus group

People in small museums are not necessarily aware of where the power lies and the power dynamics locally for iwi.

Iwi focus group

Great potential in relation to schools as a resource for the new history curriculum.

Museum volunteer, 50 Objects

The volunteers have seriously taken ownership.

External stakeholder, about Wyndham Museum

The photographs made the objects 'sing'– so clever.

Wyndham Museum volunteer

Knowing what information to gather when new items come, this will change future acceptance (or not) of objects and accessioning.

Wyndham Museum volunteer

The volunteers benefitted 100 percent and in so many different ways.

External stakeholder

An opportunity to show the community that we are trying to help ourselves, as we are starting to need help with our future plans.

Wyndham Museum volunteer

Introduction

Collections held in small museums and whare taonga in Aotearoa represent a major national and regional heritage resource, but their value cannot be fully realised because their provenance, diversity, scope, scale, and condition are generally unknown. Project Ark has been conceived to address the gap in our knowledge of Southland's regional heritage through a collection documentation and packing project. This document summarises an assessment of the Pilot, which was conducted to test the processes and implementation designed for Project Ark and supported by several partners.

In 2018 the Southland Regional Heritage Committee (SRHC), a joint committee of Invercargill City Council, Southland District Council, and Gore District Council (GDC), initiated the Pilot project for Project Ark, to test a collaborative approach to implementing sound collection documentation, storage, and online public access for small museums that are operated primarily by volunteers. Behind the thinking was an early-stage proposal for a regional collection storage facility in Southland. To inform planning for such a facility, it was critical to have a fuller understanding of the quantities and diversity of material held in the smaller, mainly volunteer-run museums' collections and whare taonga. This would involve a major inventory exercise and a systematic approach to the challenge of reviewing entire collections in museums lacking the capability or capacity to carry out such a project.

Implementation of the Pilot would also promote the concept of digitising collections for public online access, as a means of reaching visitors and researchers beyond the museum walls and engaging with new audiences through exchanges of information.

Above all, the Pilot was designed to unlock the value of the collections for the local museum in a collaborative way with a team of trained museum practitioners who would train and work alongside volunteer participants, leaving a legacy of sound museum practice to be continued. The sustainability of the collections held in smaller museums, as key heritage assets of the Southland region, would be assured. It would also provide accurate information to inform future planning and investment.

Project partners

As the primary stakeholder, SHRC is supporting Project Ark as a step towards constructing a clear picture of the extent of the small museums' collection holdings in Southland. By documenting this heritage resource, the information would be available for each museum to manage its holdings effectively, develop displays, advance research, and make sound decisions about future developments, including new acquisitions and collecting activity. Understanding the scope, scale, and level of the regional collections information would also assist SRHC in its future planning. The work would be of immense value, even if the notion of a regional collections store were not pursued.

Te Papa's National Services Te Paerangi (NSTP), which is mandated to support good practice and the sustainable development of the New Zealand museum sector, partnered with SRHC as a strategic regional initiative. The Pilot's outcomes have the potential to inform NSTP's continuing programme of work with smaller museums, iwi, and other regions of the country. The Pilot is seen as an opportunity for the whole sector to understand the efficacy and constraints of such an approach.

Vernon Systems Limited, as suppliers of the eHive collection management system, worked alongside Project Ark, resulting in modifications to the system and many mutual benefits, including additional documentation standards.

On behalf of SRHC, Gore District Council took on the operational role of managing the project on the ground. The Project Leader for the Pilot was the GDC Heritage Projects Officer. GDC employed contract staff and managed payroll. Technical assistance, information technology support, social media training, and storage of data were also provided through GDC. The Gore District's Curator of Arts and Heritage provided oversight of the project as a member of SHRC's management group, reporting to SHRC.

The team was made up of four qualified museum practitioners (the Project Leader, who had been involved from the project's inception, and three qualified museum practitioners employed on two-year contracts).

The full report documents experiences and assesses the investment and achievements of the Project Ark Pilot during 2018-2020, and can be obtained [by request](#) from National Services Te Paerangi.

Project phases

There were two main phases to the Pilot. Initially 12 museums (listed in Appendix A) each worked with Project Ark team members over two weeks to document 50 items from their collection – the 50 Objects phase. The public catalogue information was then uploaded online, together with digital images, using the collection management software eHive (https://eHive.com/). The published catalogue entries can be viewed via the Museums of Southland eHive community (https://ehive.com/communities/1145/museums-of-southland). The second more intensive phase, again using eHive, aimed to document, photograph, publish, repack, and store in recorded locations the entire holdings of one museum, using Wyndham and District Museum (https://ehive.com/collections/3102/wyndham-and-district-historical-museum) as a test case.

These two exercises were intended to benefit the participating museums by introducing basic museum skills to lay solid foundations for the museums themselves to develop their collection's documentation and management. With well-organised collections and good documentation, museum members should be better able to tell new and possibly unexpected stories about their area, its characters, and past events, through their displays, community activities, publications, and the museum's online presence.

The full report discusses the assessment methodology and both phases of the Pilot in detail.

Pilot review objectives

The objectives of the review were to:

- Assess the effectiveness of the Project Ark Pilot in achieving the following outcomes:
    - The establishment of Project Ark's eHive databases; imaging, marking, and packing protocols; and Regional Collection Guidelines.

- Cataloguing of 50 objects from each of the participating public museums in Southland.
- Cataloguing and packing all of one museum's collections, during the remainder of the Pilot, to a consistent standard that will have long-term validity.
- Identify the key elements and issues affecting the project's success
- Consider the benefits of a regional approach to collection documentation and care, including their feasibility and sustainability.

The findings were to inform a set of recommendations designed to assist future planning.

In summary, this Pilot was a rare undertaking in tackling one museum collection holistically, while also engaging with other museums to introduce contemporary documentation practice.

Key elements of the project

There were many dimensions to this complex Pilot, including practical processes to be designed for 12 different locations, and the financial resources. In addition, other key elements, including training and management of both the Pilot team and volunteers, and building effective relationships and communicating with stakeholders, are discussed in the full report.

Processes: Achieving the goal of a fully catalogued and appropriately stored object is not necessarily a linear process, given the multiple steps involved. The intended processes involved for each object are summarised in Table 1, which also indicates whether and how they were applied during the 50 Objects exercise and the Wyndham Museum test case. It should be noted that packing was *not* part of the 50 Objects exercise, as most of the objects were returned to display after being catalogued and photographed.

Table 1: Summary of intended processes and their application in the Pilot

Process elements	Application	
	50 Objects (at 12 museums)	Wyndham Museum
Identification and matching of object to acquisition documentation, if found and verified	Yes	Yes, for about 2,296 (40%) items
Assessing object against existing collection policy	Yes	Yes
Use of Pilot's significance assessment tool (see Appendix B)	Yes	Used for initial three months, thereafter truncated version used
Assessing object in satisfactory condition and physically safe to retain	Yes	Yes
Assigning a unique accession number	Yes	Yes, with previously unaccessioned items given WY.0000 prefix
Preparing information for accessioning and cataloguing, including assessing against collection policy, acquisition details, measuring, condition reporting, copyright and creative commons assessment, research, writing engaging descriptive text	Yes, with guidance	Yes, led by Pilot team

Process elements	Application	
	50 Objects (at 12 museums)	Wyndham Museum
Entering information on eHive using the fields set out in the Project Ark eHive Standards, with unique accession numbers	Yes	Yes, mostly Pilot team
Cleaning for digital image capture photography	Yes	Yes, led by Pilot team
Photography, including details and object parts as appropriate	By Pilot team	By Pilot team
Storing and backing up master images separately, and attaching catalogue image to eHive catalogue entry	Yes	By Pilot team, completed after June 2020.
Marking and/or labelling object with unique accession number	Yes, with guidance	Yes, with guidance
Preparing for packing – including determining best packing solution, designing any special support or nesting as appropriate	Not part of project	Led by Pilot team
Packing and storing in an appropriate container clearly labelled	Not part of project	Led by Pilot team
Placing packed item in intended storage location and recording location on eHive	Not part of project	Yes, current location records completed after June 2020
eHive entry reviewed for accuracy and, if Standard met, published online	Yes, by Pilot team	Inconsistent review procedure

Budget: A project of this scale requires significant resource. In this case, a total of $617,135 was secured to fund the establishment and operational costs for the 24-month Pilot. Discussion of the budget is not formally part of the review, but to indicate the scale of the undertaking and the value of public investment, see Table 2.

Table 1: Summary of Pilot budget, showing core operational and establishment costs

Items	Year One	Year Two	Total per item
Staffing and associated costs	242,405	252,405	494,810
Packing materials	20,000	20,000	40,000
Contingency for workplace leases	15,000	15,000	30,000
Establishment costs (including 10% contingency)	52,328		52,328
Annual totals	329,733	287,405	
Pilot total			**617,138**

The following should be noted:
- The budget covered the period from July 2018 to June 2020, representing funding over two financial years.

- Major staffing costs included salaries for the Co-ordinator/Project Leader and three cataloguers, and associated Kiwisaver, administration and overheads; and training and travel.
- Establishment costs included computer hardware and software, photographic equipment and lighting, scanner, photo-editing monitors, collection management software set-up, Museums of Southland website development, workplace furniture, and trestle tables.
- A separate budget line was itemised for museum quality packing supplies.
- Contingency budgets were included for temporary workplace leases and associated overheads as suitable workspace was not always available on museum premises, and for their establishment costs.
- No contingency was included to cover potential staffing issues such as periods of sick leave.

How far has Project Ark Pilot achieved its intended outcomes?

The Pilot can be said, in all material respects, to have achieved its primary intended outcome, which was to test Project Ark systems thoroughly and collaboratively and to refine processes for future implementation with other partner museums.

The Pilot has developed protocols for accessioning, cataloguing, imaging, and publishing the kinds of objects typically found in smaller New Zealand museums, and these have been applied to 3,806 items from Wyndham Museum. A further 538 items have been catalogued but not yet published (250 of these are ready to be published). A guiding document, Cataloguing Standards Project Ark and eHive, has been produced after several iterations, and will be valuable for ensuring regional consistency in documenting other collections. It evolved during the 50 Objects phase and was well-tested at Wyndham. These standards can be accessed at https://info.ehive.com/ehive-standards-for-project-ark/.

Professional packing standards have been achieved, and the collections are now well protected, albeit in temporary premises, which are not ideal. A range of packing methods were used, suitable for the types of collections encountered. However, these have not yet been turned into guidelines and incorporated into a working manual. However, a draft document Project Ark – Collection Storage was produced separately by the Roving Museum Officer by the end of the project, and there is scope for shaping this further from the Wyndham experience.

The 12 museums participating in the 50 Objects exercise are each represented with an online presence of a minimum of 50 items in their section of the Museums of Southland eHive community.

Most of Wyndham Museum's collection (3806 entries) has been catalogued, imaged, and published online to a consistent standard. A further 250 entries now have images attached and are ready to be published. These items have almost all been packed safely to ensure their long-term survival once moved to new premises.

All participants and supporters can be congratulated on these achievements.

What were the main success factors?

Key elements affecting the project's success were:

- The ambitious vision for the project and belief in its value.
- The Pilot team's energy, engagement, commitment, and flexibility, including adaptability to less than ideal working conditions.
- The museum volunteers' enthusiasm and openness to new ways of working.
- The leadership of the Chair of Wyndham Museum and the museum's commitment to transform the collection into a more valuable heritage resource.
- The appreciation of what is really involved in responsible collection management, reinforced through formal and informal training sessions.
- The willingness to share skills and the building of confidence and independence.
- The active engagement in gathering local knowledge together and developing new research skills.
- The supportive relationships, collegial atmosphere, and sense of fun.
- The SRHC heritage rate to fund the Pilot across Southland's three Territorial Authorities.
- NSTP's regional partnership with the Pilot and associated Expert Knowledge Exchanges.

What were the main issues that emerged?

Key issues identified were:

- Lack of clarity in reporting lines, expectations, and workflow.
- The necessity for adequate secure workspace adjacent to a collection.
- The value of a preliminary eHive compatible inventory to identify groups of kindred items and guide the sequence for processing a collection.
- The need for a regular significance assessment step to overcome reluctance to make deaccessioning decisions.
- A clean 'exit strategy' with a handover process which encourages continuing work by the volunteer team, and a need for 'light touch' monitoring and encouragement to ensure sustainability. Identifying key volunteers as project champions early on, for succession planning, should be part of this.
- Risk analysis and contingency planning.
- Very few items associated with Māori, including taonga, were encountered, so iwi perspectives have not yet been included or addressed.
- Lack of clarity about who would manage the Museums of Southland online community in the long-term.

What features have emerged which show the benefits of a regional approach to collection documentation and care?

Aspects of this Pilot suggest clear benefits for taking a regional approach, but to be most effective there should be a regional collection strategy, created collaboratively and consultatively, so that collectively museums' resources are developed and used effectively. This means that each museum would be clear about what it collects to tell its parts of the Story of Southland effectively, and to record its distinct community history, while by mutual agreement some themes would be acknowledged as best covered by specified museums.

In the meantime, the advantages of a regional approach to documentation include:

- A common understanding of the responsibilities involved in holding community collections.
- Early engagement with iwi that would enable development of culturally appropriate and sanctioned approaches to be applied to documentation and packaging of taonga Māori, currently in the care of small museums.
- A consistent standard of collection documentation across the region would allow museums to understand each other's collection strengths and adopt similar processing practices, resulting in a suite of associated collecting policies for Southland.
- Easy access to the scope of all regional collections through one online portal.
- Better acquisition decisions through knowing what other museums hold, thus avoiding unnecessary duplication (and associated costs of care), filling acknowledged gaps, and enhancing locally relevant themes.
- Collaboration in developing joint exhibitions, research, and other museum activities.
- Development of common standards and packing guidelines to extend the life of the collections, but with the caveat that properly packed collections take up more room (which some museums may not have) and are both cost and labour intensive to achieve. Museums would need to seriously consider deaccessioning and make informed decisions in relation to any potential retrospective accessioning.

- A common approach to packing that would allow negotiation of better prices when buying conservation materials and equipment in bulk at the outset of a project, especially if box, crates, and shelving sizes were standardised.

How can a regional approach be maintained over the long-term?

There are issues to be considered to ensure feasibility and sustainability. The principal ones, unsurprisingly, are funding for museum-specific 'whole of collection' projects and access to ongoing support with both documentation and collection care, especially if collections are active rather than static.

A dedicated, paid team can come in once for an extended period and 'break the back' of documenting and packing a museum's collection, but the museum must take responsibility to continue the work and maintain the standards.

Collection documentation involves different steps, and these are most meaningful when in regular use. When accessioning and cataloguing is done in an ad hoc manner, it is hard to retain familiarity with the standards and processes. There may be value in identifying a regional eHive troubleshooter who can make regular rounds to organise documentation sessions, host refreshers, or provide other pastoral support.

Having collections online, however, may attract new volunteers from the local community: digital immigrants or digital natives with a wealth of IT skills such as data management, digital photography, and social media. Promoting this aspect of collections work, and the sense of being part of a region-wide effort, could assist museums with succession planning.

Once introduced to the documentation guidelines and cataloguing standards, museums may be able to keep the documentation up to date and incorporate new research and user-generated information. Accuracy and quality control will remain an issue but the right volunteers will take pride in their work.

Once the bulk of a museum's collection has been packed for storage, regular monitoring of condition needs to take place, as well as appropriate packing created for new acquisitions. The rate at which small museums make new acquisitions is a 'known unknown'. While some museums may have records from which this may be estimated, these are unlikely to be numerous. Therefore the need for new packing may be sporadic. Unless a museum has space and the basic environmental conditions for safe storage of a range of packing supplies, acquiring these on an 'as needed' basis may be best, although more expensive. If regional guidelines and sizes were agreed, then museums could collaborate and partner with one or two others for working bees, or volunteer to help each other tackle specific types of object.

As a final comment, this Pilot project has value, not just for Southland, but also as an exploration of a potential model applicable in other parts of New Zealand. The experience has raised issues and generated insights which can be addressed in the next phase of Project Ark. The whole venture must be applauded for the imagination and energy and immense goodwill which so many have contributed to this Pilot.

Recommendations made to Project Ark Pilot by the independent evaluator

The high level of interest in Project Art Pilot, and the concept behind its ambitions, has led to the prospect of applying the model at other Southland museums and perhaps beyond. Based on the evidence in the review of the Pilot, the recommendations are made principally for Project Ark's consideration to further the success of the model. However, some recommendations have more general relevance to regional collections in the longer term.

Positioning

Project Ark needs to have a clear position within the Southland heritage scene.

- Project Ark should be clearly positioned as a legacy project, initially focusing on selected volunteer museums, but contributing more widely to Southland's regional heritage. Its ability to embed sound collection management practice to extend the value of collections held, and make them more readily discoverable, will increase the collections' sustainability, utility, and vitality.
- Identifying and promoting a single brand to connect all the museums in Southland, not just those involved in Project Ark, in partnership with other stakeholders, will dispel confusion in a crowded field.
- A unifying website will give visibility and connectivity to the 20 or so museums within Southland and their own websites, as well as an entry point to the collections of participants in the 50 Objects exercise and any other museums with online collections. This will require resourcing to create and actively maintain relevant and engaging content.

Project management

Effective and responsive management will continue to be important as Project Ark moves to the next level.

- The relationship between Project Ark and Southland's Roving Museum Officer's role needs to be clarified, to ensure clear line management for the project team and for the volunteer participants, as well as external stakeholders.

- For any future phase of Project Ark comparable in scale to the Wyndham Museum test case, undertaking an inventory using eHive compatible spreadsheets to gain an initial sense of the scope of the collection will enable a more programmed approach. Like materials or object types can be processed together more efficiently, and a storage logic will become clearer, and double handling of data and objects reduced.

- Use of the inventory will establish workflow prior to embarking on full cataloguing and packing.

- Clear expectations and targets should be set with the project team and regularly monitored, including a quality control process for both cataloguing and packing.

- Training needs should be identified early, and where necessary workshops organised. If outside practitioners are needed, training can be co-managed with others, for example, the Roving Museum Officer, Southland Museum and Art Gallery (SMAG), and NSTP, to get the most value for the region.

- Understanding tikanga Māori and copyright should be priorities for both team members and host museum volunteers.

- Managing relationships between team members and volunteers is critical so that volunteers see value in the time they invest and can confidently make the shift from being active partners to taking ownership of a project.

- Ongoing liaison with the Roving Museum Officer is maintained.

Future-proofing

Planning for what happens when the Project Ark team moves on to a new museum should start as early as possible.

- Keep key stakeholders abreast of progress and include them in marking milestone events.

- The Roving Museum Officer role provides an important source of advice on regionally specific issues, in addition to professional expertise and a network of specialists. As the lynchpin for Southland's museum community, this role is pivotal for continuity in standards of collection management.

- Integrating the museum volunteers into the work of documenting and packing the collection is essential, so that they understand both the scope of the responsibilities of managing a collection as well as the expanded potential resulting from the online presence in the Museums of Southland eHive community.

- Highlight the online dimensions of Project Ark, as potential volunteers will increasingly have IT and social media skills as the balance shifts from digital immigrants to digital natives, and this can broaden the recruitment base for museums.

- Allocate one team member to document the aspects of the work which appear to present challenges for the museum volunteer cohort, based on feedback and observations from both volunteers and team members.

- Use this information to inform in-house training, but also include insights in what will become a handover document of other guidance that is relevant to the types of collections and issues encountered.

- Develop an exit strategy for a smooth handover of ongoing management of eHive data and the well-packed collections.

Team members

The processing team are the key players in driving Project Ark on the ground.

- Collectively, a range of skills brought together is the best resource for Project Ark. Recruitment should stress the need for flexibility, willingness to work collaboratively, resourcefulness, a solutions focus, and openness to acquiring new skills.

- For cataloguing tasks, accuracy for quality documentation should be highlighted. Social media skills have also proved important in keeping the project in the public eye.

- Interpersonal skills and respect for skills and knowledge in the community are critical for success.

- Clarity of expectations and reporting lines will assist achievement of targets, alongside understanding of the need for accountability to funders and other supporters and stakeholders.

- The structure and concerns of the museum and heritage sector in Southland should be explained, with early opportunities to meet key stakeholders, such as the SRHC, the Roving Museum Officer, and SMAG team.

- Team members should be encouraged to undertake focused training sessions alongside other team members when opportunities arise (for example, those organised by the Roving Museum Officer, NSTP, and Heritage South), along with host museum volunteers, as well as to provide their own sessions for volunteers.

- Ideally the Project Leader will be a regular member of the team and take responsibility for quality control of published catalogue entries, as well as monitoring and supervision.

Quality control

The Pilot project has now set a good standard for published entries in the Museums of Southland eHive community, and the efficacy of the unpublished collection management information will continue to depend on accuracy and consistency.

- Quality control of eHive entries needs to be a regular part of the process, undertaken while data is relatively 'fresh' and the catalogued items are still readily accessible if they need to be referred to.

- Quality control should be highlighted as a key step in the workflow, with cataloguers able to be identified as part of the cross-checking process to assist in establishing good practice.

Significance assessment and deaccessioning

Project Ark represents a major investment to secure the long-term future of Southland's collections. It is important that the items processed are subject to an agreed assessment procedure, so that all items catalogued have demonstrable heritage value and use potential.

- The value and processes of significance assessment and deaccessioning must be understood by both Project Ark team members and host museum volunteers.

- Conversations about the significance of objects and the nature of the value (and information about their associations) they may have for the museum in fulfilling its purpose should start early.

- A simple but straightforward significance assessment process should be adopted as part of the workflow to ensure resources of time and effort are used effectively.

- Representatives of the museum should be involved in final decisions without slowing down the workflow.

- Plans for disposal should be developed in line with ethical museum practice.

Resources

The following key resources may not always be available at every site, but need to be addressed.

- Secure operating space where items can be spread out to be prepared, photographed, and packed effectively is essential. Different workstations may be needed, depending on the number of volunteers involved.

- Key storage materials and equipment, and their early specification for purchase by host museums.

- At least two trolleys to assist safe and efficient movement of objects between workspaces and stores.

- Reliable Wi-Fi coverage to support documentation and uploading and ongoing storage of data.

- Data storage that is secure and reliable and continuously available.

The importance of regional collaboration and partnership

Collaboration with the wider heritage sector in the region remains essential to project success.

- Keep funders and supporters informed of progress, and acknowledge their support wherever practical – websites, community events, media interviews, and so on.

- Report regularly to key partners.

- Collaborate with the Roving Museum Officer by responding to requests for hosting visits and assistance in her pastoral care role, and by offering demonstrations or sharing skills with her wider network of museums.

- Create opportunities to share successes by holding occasional open days, participating in community events, or offering evening lectures or similar to groups in the host community.

- Continue networking opportunities among the 50 Objects partners, along with the other regional museums.

- Understanding what other museums hold can assist with reviewing collection policies to reflect regional strengths and stories, and address issues of deaccessioning. The notion of collaboratively developed collecting policies among the region's museums should still be an aspiration.

- Group participation in the New Zealand Museums Standards Scheme, especially the Collection Management module elements, should be considered as a means of maintaining the focus of the small museums.

The importance of volunteers

Volunteers will continue to be the lifeblood of Southland's museums, as both implementers and beneficiaries of Project Ark.

- Volunteers' existing skills and knowledge should be identified, and their value recognised to build confidence, trust, and enthusiasm.

- Volunteers can be asked to present their experience or demonstrate and/or assist with training.

- To build confidence, focus volunteers' work on groups of objects with shared characteristics that can be processed easily as a group and give a sense of achievement when that step is complete.

- Creating an atmosphere of shared endeavour and experiences and knowledge will enrich the heritage resource as well as populate the eHive entries with better stories.

- There is a need to recognise the other demands on volunteers' time, but also to set a regular schedule of times when volunteers can be supervised. This establishes work patterns for all and will assist in determining workflows.

- Volunteers are key ambassadors and recruits for the project, and keeping them engaged in aspects of the project including promotional activities and reporting, will increase local support for the project, build understanding of expectations, and foster a common sense of purpose and achievement.

- Celebrating milestones together, such as the 100th or 1000th item processed, can help to maintain momentum and underline achievements made.

- Encourage early respectful use of social media to promote the project locally.

- Encourage volunteers to invite their contacts to 'add comments' to eHive entries known to be of interest.

The importance of connecting to people's lives

The 'About this object' entries are most successful when the objects are related to local stories or otherwise contextualised in a meaningful way.

- Build on the success of emphasising the stories associated with items or groups of items as ways to humanise the objects.

- Recognise that the heritage resources being processed will represent the history of people in the community, including but not limited to, volunteers' families and friends.

- Ensure that Māori stories are told by and/or with Māori participants.

- Encourage partnering museums to respond to information and online requests from users and to incorporate new information in the records.

- Recognise the opportunities presented by the new history curriculum (from 2022) to engage local school students and teachers with both physical and online collections.

Advocacy

Recognising that ongoing funding will be needed to bring Project Ark to all the regional museums, the value of the work needs to be kept in the public eye through a range of channels.

- Regular reporting to funders with narrative as well as target figures and financial accounting, and show-and-tell opportunities.

- A social media strategy led by the team but involving volunteers at the host museums.

- Encouraging the 50 Objects museums to make reference on their own websites to Project Ark and to create links to their eHive collections.

Working with National Services Te Paerangi

Project Ark has potential to serve as a model applicable to other regions in Aotearoa New Zealand, and thus has received active interest and support from National Services Te Paerangi. NSTP encourages museums of all kinds to use collection management software, such as eHive, and to become part of the New Zealand Museums community.

- Continue to partner with NSTP as host of New Zealand Museums

- Enable the project team and museum volunteers to participate in relevant training opportunities offered by NSTP and contribute to their programmes.

- Partnering with NSTP to develop a clear set of decision-making tools for assessing significance and deaccessioning procedures, as well as disposal guidelines, should be explored as these would have value to the wider museum sector.

- Contribute to any NSTP-led discussions about further development of NZ Museums as one pivotal resource for the New Zealand heritage sector.

Working with Vernon Systems

eHive has already worked alongside Project Ark resulting in many mutual benefits. There is scope for further co-development work.

- Continue the partnership with Vernon Systems, especially in developing documentation practices relating to taonga Māori and other objects with Māori associations.

- Establish a Museums of Southland eHive users group.

Increasing the discoverability of the collections

The digital domain constantly presents new opportunities for museums through the internet, websites, and social media.

- In addition to the eHive Museums of Southland website and the NZ Museums website, consideration should be given to including the site in the DigitalNZ community.

- On the museums' own websites, if they have them, there could be links to their eHive presence.

- If a Museums of Southland website (however branded) is developed, this should also direct traffic to the individual museums' websites (if they have them) as well as the Museums of Southland eHive community.

- Once SMAG has settled into its new direction, a link from its website to the regional museums and online collections will also drive traffic to these new heritage resources.

- Collaborate with iwi on the search tags associated with dimensions of Māori history and culture related to objects to be catalogued.

Training

Training for volunteers will need reinforcement by the Project Ark team, so team members need to be familiar with all the key processes as soon as possible.

- Training workshops on specific themes should include both team members and volunteers, and team members may be able to deliver some of this training.

- eHive, copyright, and tikanga training should be a priority.

- Specific topics will depend on the nature of the collections and conditions encountered, but in addition to documentation, these should include handling, marking, and measuring.

- Project team members new to the museum sector should be encouraged to study for the New Zealand Certificate in Museum Practice through ServiceIQ. Museum volunteers might also be encouraged to undertake this with onsite peer support.

- Training for working with taonga Māori should be designed and delivered with local runaka.

- Once the workflow has been established, internship opportunities for museum studies and related heritage studies students should be pursued/offered if space, supervision, and interest are available, giving focussed hands-on practice on a defined aspect of the collections for a sense of achievement.

Iwi partnership

Given the range of heritage initiatives taking place in Murihiku and within the areas of interest to Ngāi Tahu, it is important that Project Ark work towards active partnership as a critical next step.

- Initiate discussions with iwi representatives as early as feasible, especially if Te Hikoi is to be the next site for Project Ark, and include demonstrating eHive and showing the types of collection care that are available.

- Once initial contacts have become established, invite local runaka to meet with the team and volunteers to introduce their tikanga and key local stories to build mutual respect.

- Address issues of the Māori presence in published catalogue entries on eHive by working with iwi on language and phraseology for free texts and consistent terminology for searches. This may require some revision of Cataloguing Standards Project Ark and eHive, in collaboration with Vernon Systems.

- Ensure team members and volunteers understand issues around cultural rights/copyright with further training.

- Collaborate with iwi members to devise storage solutions which meet cultural requirements

- Support museums to work with local Māori, to tell the stories that Māori wish to tell, including consideration of the balance of 'masculine' and 'feminine' stories.

Appendix A   Partner museums participating in the 50 Objects exercise
https://ehive.com/communities/1145/museums-of-southland
Number of objects published on eHive in **bold**

Museum	eHive link	Collection scope	Published online
Awarua Communications Museum Inc, Awarua	https://ehive.com/collections/8060/awarua-communications-museum-inc	Special interest collection. 4,000 items, large and small, including film	**50**
Bluff Maritime Museum, Bluff	https://ehive.com/collections/3234/bluff-maritime-museum	Maritime and social history	**50**
Eastern Southland Gallery, Gore	https://ehive.com/collections/3321/eastern-southland-gallery	1,000 art and ethnography items	**50**
Gore Historical Museum, Gore	https://ehive.com/collections/3043/gore-historical-museum	Social history. Some special collections. Photographs	**50**
Hokonui Pioneer Village and Museum, Croyden	https://ehive.com/collections/5961/hokonui-pioneer-village-museum	Agriculture, historic buildings, rural life, farm machinery – 'good cross section'	**51**
Mataura Museum, Mataura	https://ehive.com/collections/4033/mataura-museum	Local life, industry. Nothing big	**3,197**
Otautau Museum, Otautau	https://ehive.com/collections/3370/otautau-museum	Family history, maps, mining, forestry, farming community life	**52** (main collection in PastPerfect).
Switzers Museum (Waikaia) Inc, Waikaia	https://ehive.com/collections/4201/switzers-museum-waikaia-inc	Everything from organs to button	**2** (plus 2,500 items catalogued in PastPerfect)
Te Hikoi Museum, Riverton	https://ehive.com/collections/3278/te-hikoi-museum	Taonga Māori (many from archaeological contexts), social history, geology	**52**
Thornbury Vintage Tractor Club, Thornbury	https://ehive.com/collections/8551/thornbury-vintage-tractor-club	Farming and country life, machinery (range of sizes)	**50**

Waikawa Museum, Waikawa	https://ehive.com/collections/3338/waikawa-museum	Social history – tools, photographs, costume, farming, domestic life	**50**
Wyndham and District Historical Museum, Wyndham	https://ehive.com/collections/3102/wyndham-and-district-historical-museum	Community collection, town and country life, social history, photographs	**3,806** – test case museum (plus 250 ready to publish)

Appendix B   Significance assessment sheet used in the Pilot
PROJECT ARK SIGNIFICANCE CHECKLIST

Date:

Assessors:

Object Number:

This checklist is based on Significance 2.0 principles. It is the sum of the elements that matters not each individual consideration (that is, it is a matrix of considerations).
Does this object fit within the museum's collection policy? • Within collection policy = Yes/No
Do we know the object's provenance? its life story? its chain of ownership? Provenance = None   Provenance = Partial   Provenance = Complete
If further research is required, record this point in the cataloguing research comments field.
Significance rating system 1. No significance found 2. Limited significance found 3. Clear significance found 4. High significance found 5. Exceptional significance found
Is the object historically significant? Does it relate to an important historical event or theme? Or does it relate to a person who connects to such events or themes? Does it speak of something wider than itself? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Is it artistically or aesthetically significant? Does it have visual impact? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Does the item have considerable research potential? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Social or spiritual significance? Does it embody social or spiritual beliefs, ideas, customs, traditions, practices, or stories that are important for a particular group? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High Significance of taonga Māori requires input from iwi and specialists.
Is it representative? It is typical or characteristic of an era, way of life or doing things? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Interpretative significance? Does it have story-telling potential? Are we likely to get it out of its box? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Does it connect to a local site, person, family, or business? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Is it unique or rare? The uniqueness of its story is captured in its historical value. Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Use-ability? Education and/or profile raising and/or marketing and/or income generation? Low 1   2   3   4   5   High
Location significance • No or minimal significance • Site specific significance • Community significance • Regional significance • National significance • International significance
Are there any other reasons why this item is significant (or not)?