



FUTURE PROOF MUSEUMS



Image courtesy of Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust Business Model Case Study



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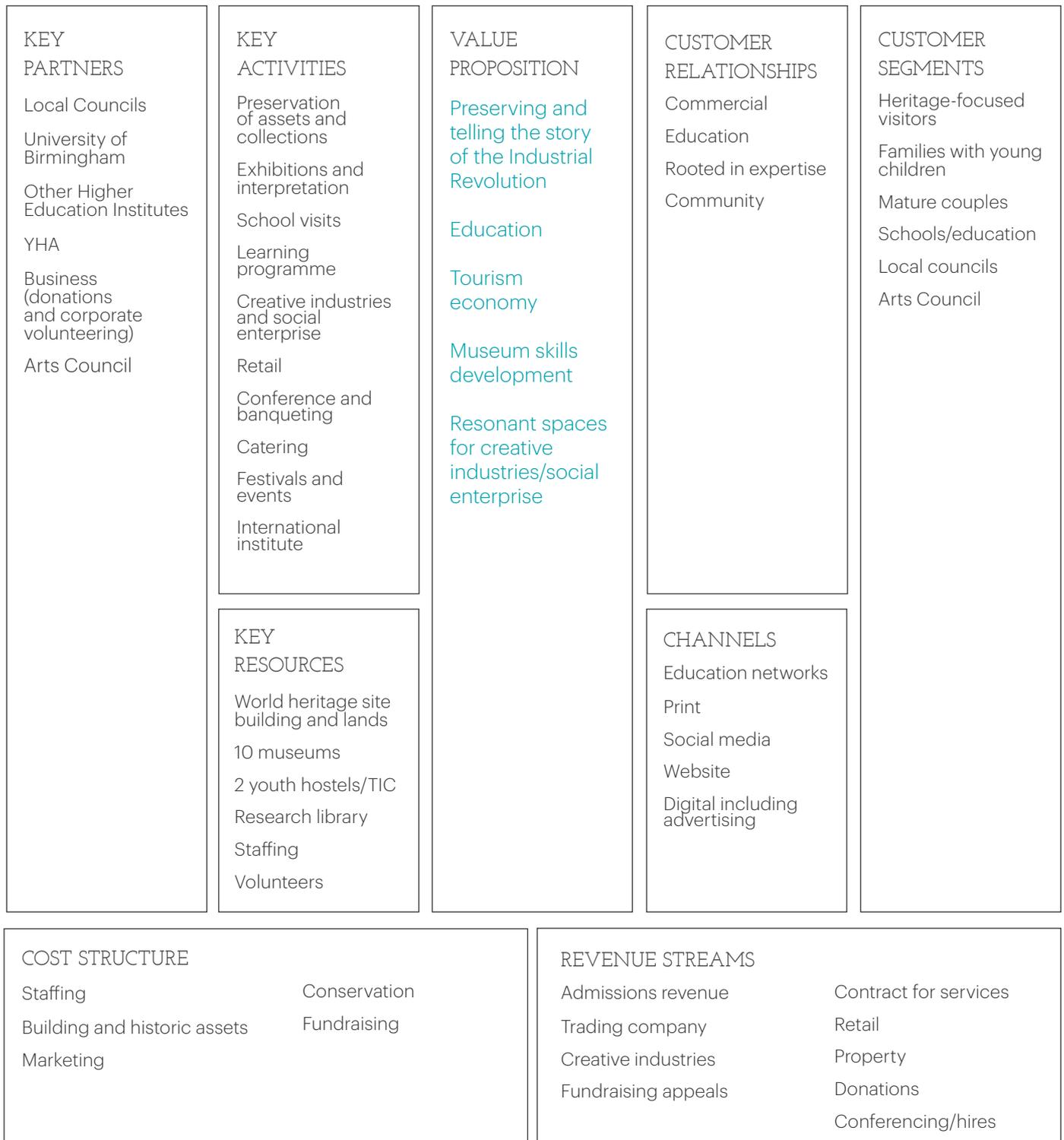
Ironbridge Gorge
Museum Trust is future
proofing the story of
the industrial revolution
by trying new things,
being flexible and
taking calculated risks.

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Thinking Practice

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Business Model Canvas



Ironbridge exists to preserve and interpret the remains of the Industrial Revolution in the six square miles of the Ironbridge Gorge.

Introducing Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust

Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust manages 10 museums within a World Heritage Site. It includes the world's first iron bridge.

Its purpose is to preserve and interpret the remains of the Industrial Revolution in the six square miles of the Ironbridge Gorge.

Ironbridge is a registered educational and heritage conservation charity, with a related trading company.

In 2011, a Museum Development Trust that had been the main conduit for fundraising in the past merged with the Museum Trust. This allowed greater efficiency and sharper focus for a new fundraising strategy.

Innovations within the Trust's business model are resource and offer-driven.

The Business Model

The Trust's business model is driven by a unique set of Key Resources and Value Propositions and the Key Activities they make possible.

Recent years have seen a growing emphasis on retail and earned income, alongside admission fees, but innovations within the business model are resource and offer-driven.

The Trust owns many historic buildings and estates within a World Heritage Site. It has recently negotiated a 10 year Service Level Agreement to manage the site on behalf of the local authorities. The agreement has increased income security while maintaining the Trust's independence. This has allowed the Trust to try new things, be flexible and take calculated risks.

The Trust has developed individual sites and offers such as Enginuity, the national design and technology centre, and enhanced visitor experience based on intellectual and building assets.

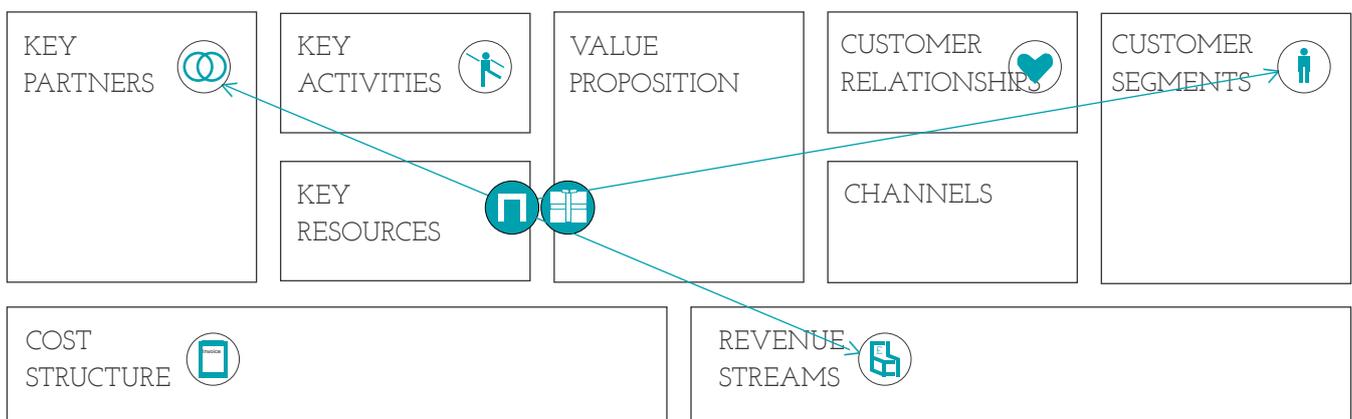
In 2013 the Trust established a 'Fab Lab' including 3D printing among other new design and manufacturing technologies. It was the first in a UK museum and

has been incredibly useful in several ways. It has created an enhanced offer for older school pupils, with positive revenue benefit. It has been used to make things for Ironbridge itself such as signs, kits and sets for exhibition designs; this has reduced costs and enabled staff creativity. It is also used by external customers and makers and to do laser-cutting to commission. This has expanded partnerships as well as earned income.

Preserving and telling the story of the industrial revolution is at the heart of the Trust's Value Proposition to a range of Customer Segments. Visitors are core to these segments, including schools, families and other mature heritage-interested visitors.

The range of Customer Segments works well to create diverse income streams throughout the year. In school holidays families with children under 12 are a particular focus. During term time schools and older couples are core customers. Grandparents bringing pre-school children are a growing segment.

The Core of Business Model Innovation



Ironbridge has a Multiple-Epicentre Driven model of innovation. Its unique set of Key Resources and its Value Proposition to a wide range of Customer Segments drive its business model. Developing individual sites and offers has enabled the Trust to enhance customer experience, develop new partnerships and introduce new Revenue Streams.

Too crude a commerciality would undermine the core of the Ironbridge business model.

Future Proofing

The way Customer Segments connect to Revenue Streams and the Value Proposition creates what Osterwalder and Peigneur call a 'multi-sided platform'. The visitors are essential to the financial aspects as around 50% of revenue comes from admissions. A further 25% comes from retail and trading, which is dependent on visitor numbers and experience.

The majority of visitors buy an 'annual passport ticket', which allows unlimited access to the 10 museums for a year. Most marketing investment goes into promoting the Victorian town experience at Bliss Hill, where an 'attract and disperse' strategy leads people to other sites.

Activity changes during school holiday periods, reflecting the Trust's approach of targeting different Customer Segments at different times of year.

The programme has become increasingly event-driven, responding to customer behaviour. Events and festivals will increasingly last a week and become a driver for visits rather than a 'bonus' for those visiting anyway.

The income from funders is partially dependent on those visitors, as well as the Trust's stewardship of its assets. As a Major Partner Museum of Arts Council England Ironbridge's funding is to some degree reliant on visitor numbers and experience.

Becoming an Arts Council-funded organisation has led to innovation in programming activity and increasing connection to contemporary art and artists, festivals and events. Most notably, the Trust hosted one of the major artist commissions for the West Midlands during the 2012 Cultural Olympiad.

Volunteering and partnerships also play a key part in the model for Ironbridge. Although they never substitute for paid staff, there are over 1,000 volunteers who support the Trust in a variety of ways. This includes over 500 active volunteers and more than 500 who are involved less regularly. Nearly 30% of the Trust's volunteers are under 30 years of age. The Trust invests in volunteer training and corporate volunteering is a big area of partnership.

Cap Gemini, who have a large base in nearby Telford, bring 10 volunteers every week. They also do special volunteering events with 100 people working for 2 days. Ironbridge has relationships with small local businesses as well as large corporate organisations. These are often focused on particular projects.

The Value Proposition ties together the Trust's Key Resources by contributing to tourism and education at all levels as well as offering spaces for social enterprise, retail and creative industries. These are delivered through the Key Activities. Artists and makers, for instance, have units within the museum. These bring in rental income, enhance the visitor experience, and support creative industries.

Tile manufacturer Craven Dunhill has a factory as part of the museum, which visitors can experience. This use also helps protect a Key Resource, as unoccupied buildings deteriorate and are costly.

Ironbridge's education offer includes primary and secondary schools and further and higher education levels.

It has a 30-year-old partnership with the University of Birmingham, with whom it formed the Ironbridge International Institute for Cultural Heritage. Several hundred students have now followed the Masters and Diploma programmes.

It also works with other universities on specific partnerships or research projects relating to its unique assets and expertise, including Wolverhampton, Southampton, Nottingham and Exeter.

This academic credibility is core to the Value Proposition to all customer segments. It is vital to attracting visitors that the Museum retains curatorial credibility, especially in its 'recreation' aspects. Each new introduction is painstakingly researched.

Too crude a commerciality would undermine the core of the Ironbridge business model.

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