

MUSEUMS SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Museums can reveal themselves as privileged spaces for contributing to the future of intangible cultural heritage (ICH)*. More so, they are among the first-choice institutions supporting the communities, groups and individuals (CGIs) that practice this living heritage in their safeguarding endeavors.

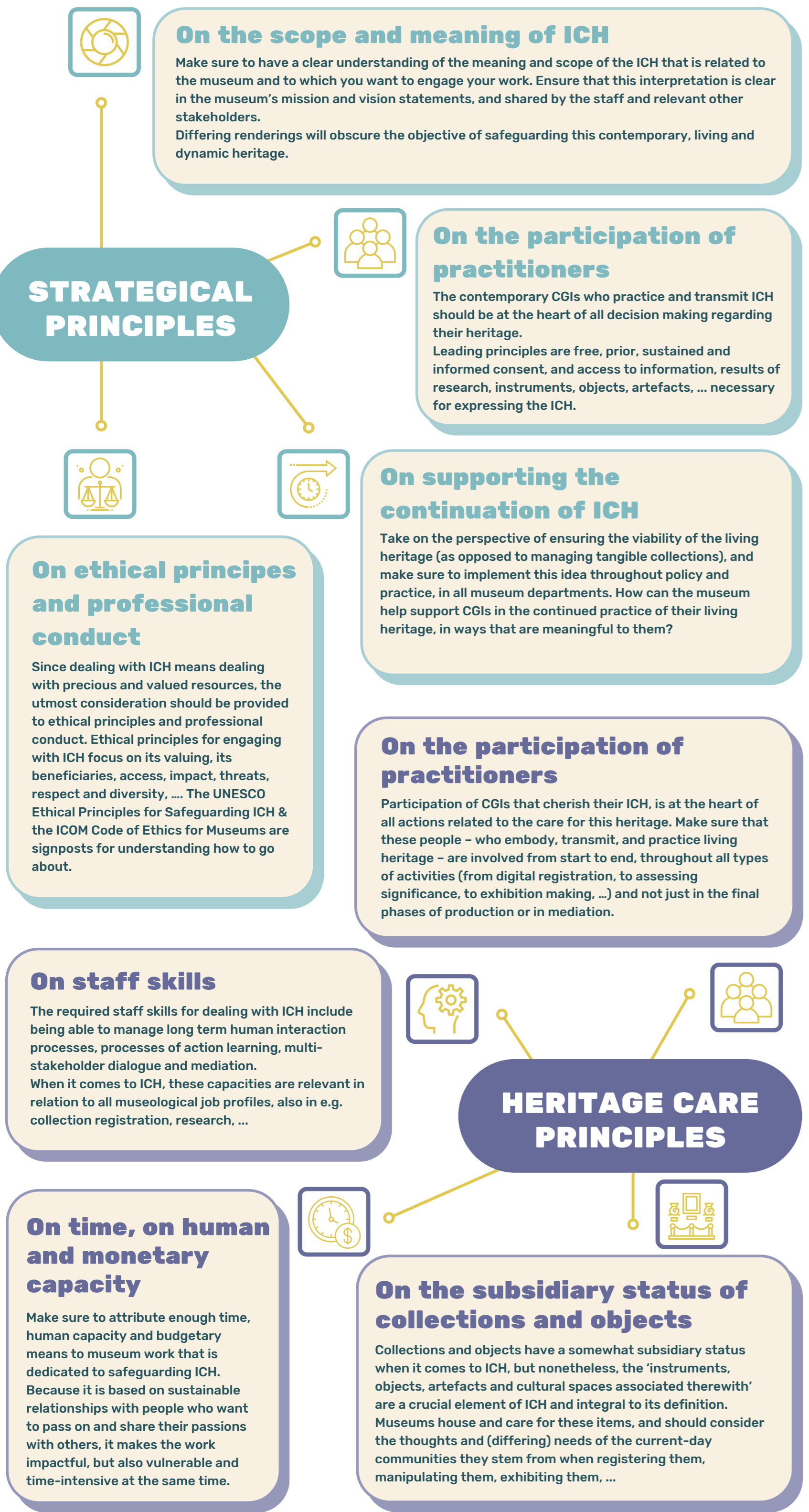
How can museums embrace the participatory and future-oriented spirit that underlies the paradigm of intangible cultural heritage?

*INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE (ICH)?

'The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. [...]'

Intangible cultural heritage, as described in the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

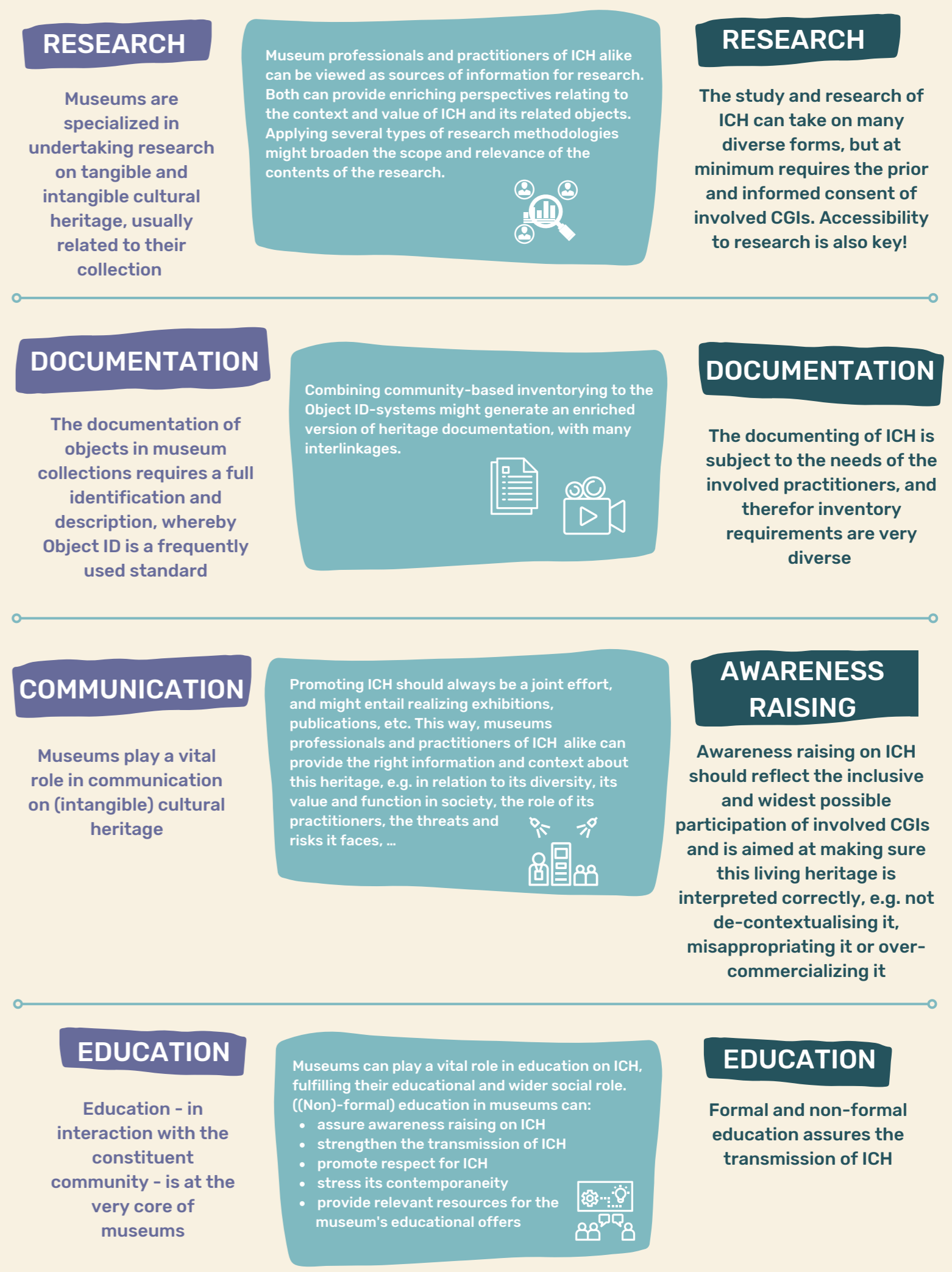
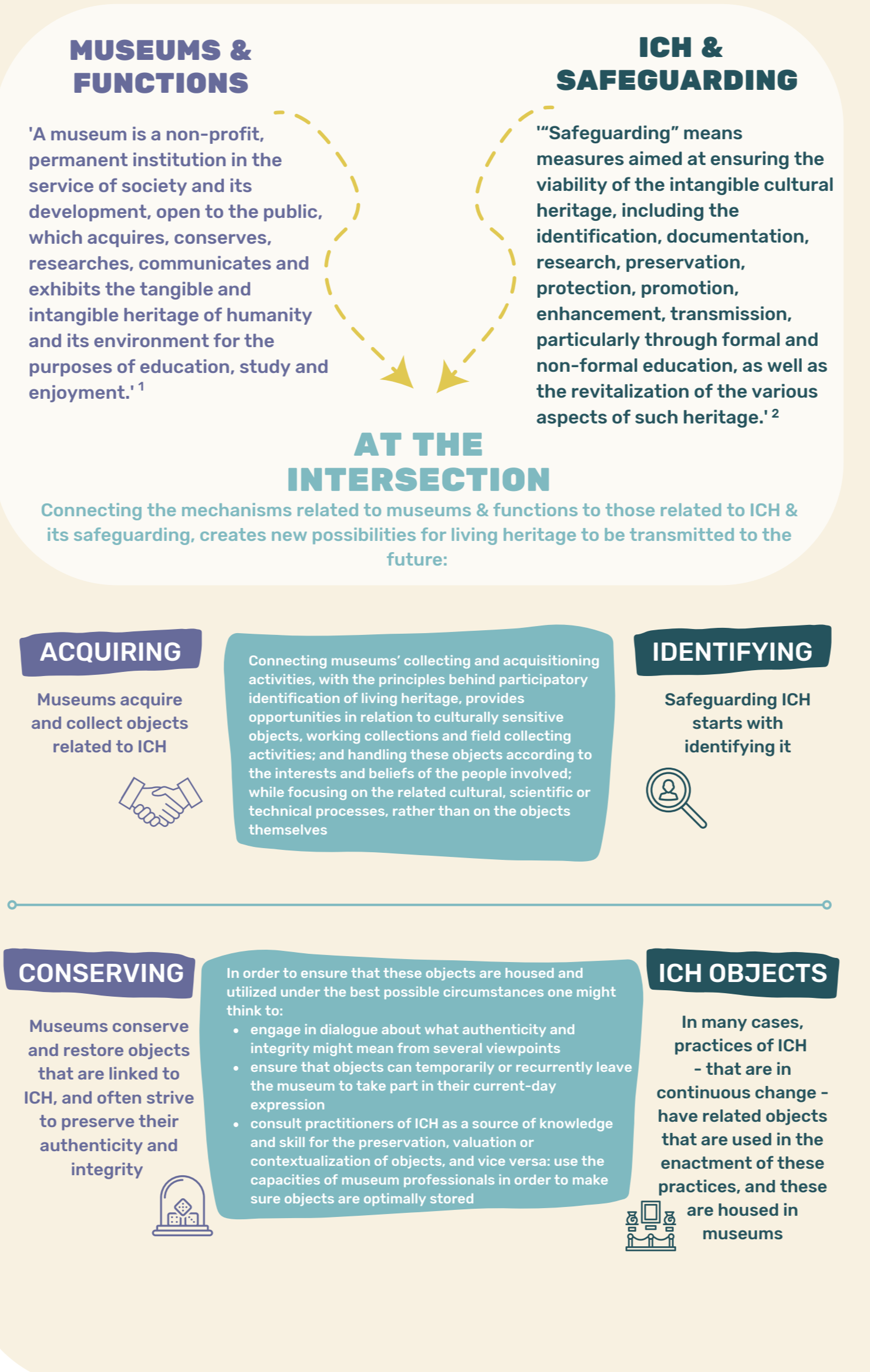
- #### ICH DOMAINS
- oral traditions & expressions
 - performing arts
 - social practices, rituals & festive events
 - knowledge & practices concerning nature & the universe
 - traditional craftsmanship



Transforming and combining shared approaches

Museum professionals and practitioners of ICH have differing but equal and complementary (levels of) capacity in relation to safeguarding living heritage. It is worthwhile to pool their existing skill-sets and know-how for the common purpose of heritage care. This way, practitioners are supported in future-proofing the dynamic heritage that they cherish, and museums are provided with the opportunity to take up a role in relation to community wellbeing, sustainable development, ...

Where do the functions that museums perform (based on the ICOM museum definition and the Code of Ethics for Museums) intersect with safeguarding measures for ICH (based on the UNESCO 2003 Convention and its related Operational Directives) carried out by its practitioners? How does combining these commonly applied methods for heritage care, transform accustomed practices? And what potential does this unravel with an eye on safeguarding ICH in/with museums?



¹ ICOM museum definition (2007)
² 'Safeguarding' according to the 2003 UNESCO Convention