

Exhibition Policy and Procedures

Museum exhibits are the most accessible and visible component of a museum's operation. The quality and effectiveness of a museum's exhibits directly effects the ability of a museum to interpret its' collections, communicate with audiences and stimulate community involvement in their own heritage, through the museum. In addition, good quality exhibits help to and demonstrate a professional image. The key to successful and effective exhibits begins with a clear and consistent exhibit standard and framework outlined in exhibit policies and procedures.

An exhibition policy is based on the goals and objectives outlined in the interpretation policy, the types and interests of the audience and the resources available to the museum. Specifically, exhibit policies and procedures should ensure that all exhibits are:

- consistent with the museum's mission statement in theme and content
- supported by sufficient research
- designed and developed by individuals with sufficient skills and training
- supported by interpretation methods to meet a range of visitor needs
- supported by programming related to the exhibit
- committed to conservation standards in the display and use of artifacts
- committed to ethical and legal behavior and meet all municipal, provincial and federal legislation that is relevant to the exhibit
- committed to public access and safety
- evaluated by the museum governing body, staff and public

Museum exhibition policies and procedures should include:

- an outline of the museum's exhibit goals i.e. what the museum wants to convey to their visitors through their exhibits
- an outline and priority of the themes for exhibits
- consideration of exhibit audiences
- standards for display appearance and style such as specifications for such things as materials, finishes, colours, heights, scale, guidelines for labels, etc.
- standards for development and production outlining who and how will exhibits will be curated and physically produced
- exhibit conservation i.e. what policies and procedures will be followed to ensure the preservation of collections on display
- consideration for the use of space. How will the museum space be used in the overall exhibit plan?

For more information on this topic see:

Guidelines for the Operations of Community Museums in Newfoundland and Labrador Exhibition – Page 65.

Resources for Developing Exhibition Policy and Procedures

Western Australia Museums – Exhibition Policy

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/documents/ExhibitionPolicy.doc>

Ontario Museum Notes # 9 –Developing an Exhibition Policy for the Museum

<http://www.culture.gov.on.ca/english/heritage/museums/munote9.htm>

British Columbia Museum Association

Best Practices Module: Exhibit and Related Program Planning

<http://www.museumsassn.bc.ca/Images/Best%20Practices%20Modules%202/Exhibits%20FINAL.pdf>

Western Australia Museum Association

Interpretation and Exhibition

Topics include: interpretation and exhibition plans, interpretation and exhibition development, text, labels, lighting, exhibition and interpretation issues, education programming and evaluation.

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/services/map/interpretation.asp>

Examples of Exhibition Policy and Procedures

Reece Museum Exhibit Policy

<http://64.233.169.104/search?q=cache:upkqGT12E5EJ:www.etsu.edu/reece/exhibition%2520policy.doc+Museum+Policy+and+Procedure+Templates&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=10&gl=ca&client=firefox-a>

Examples Available Offline

Greater Sudbury Museum Exhibition Policy

http://www.sudburymuseums.ca/index.cfm?app=w_vmuseum&lang=en&secid=567&type=doc

Museum of Health Care at Kingston Exhibit Policy

<http://www.museumofhealthcare.ca/about.html>