

AASLH Small Museums Committee 2008 Small Museum Needs Assessments Executive Summary

Leadership

Professional paid staff and professionally trained, unpaid staff are increasingly leading small museums, however continuity and sustainability are issues due to high leadership turnover in both staff and board members

Resources Needed

- Training – practical, content-based training is needed for staff & boards (& volunteers) to increase professionalism and pursue nationally accepted standards
- Networking/Collaboration – share local resources with other museums; provide support; promote rejuvenation and sharing of innovative ideas
- Funding – as for all non-profits, finding new and/or stable sources of funding is challenging

Resource Content Areas

Primary

- Community – communicating with an increasingly transient population to make local history relevant, without the traditional family connections to local history (including board members, local government, volunteers)
- Fundraising – where to find money, how to get it and prioritize how it is spent
- Volunteers – given demographic changes, create new models for how to recruit volunteers, train them, and keep them
- Governance – board training and recruitment, especially in understanding their roles in strategic planning, fundraising, and making and upholding policy
- Collections Care – preserving the objects that make visiting a museum an authentic connection with the past, including policies and procedures, archival storage, pest management, and environmental control

Secondary

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| • Advocacy | • Mentoring/Networking |
| • Audience Research | • Merging with another organization |
| • Collaborations | • Programs |
| • Conservation | • Schools |
| • Exhibits (engaging and low budget) | • Security |
| • Improving visitation | • Technology |
| • Marketing | |

Barriers to Meeting Needs

- Locating the right resources (human, financial, and training)
- Affordability of resources
- Time to locate, fund, & apply resources and training

Perceptions

We need to improve the perceptions...

- ...of small museums by the museum community, including small museums themselves

- ...of small museums' value by their local communities

- ...of the value of local history by everyone