

EXHIBITION POLICY GUIDELINES

The Exhibition Policy states the nature, parameters, goals and priorities of the exhibition program. The policy statement may be accompanied by a set of guidelines to help ensure the policy is kept on track. The most useful policy will avoid vagueness and inconsistency. It should play an important role in ensuring continuity of direction and activity in times of upheaval (both economic and political) and change. The Exhibition Policy must be periodically reviewed and revised as the overall operation of the museum evolves and changes. The policy for each museum has to be tailor-made in line with its mission and operation. Certain basic factors to be considered in formulating the policy, however, will be the same. These are:
SUBJECT MATTER: The fields of interest the museum intends to be involved in e.g. archaeology, ethnology, human history, etc.

GEOGRAPHIC PARAMETERS: Local, regional, national, worldwide. Most community museums limit themselves to dealing with their local area at least in their more permanent exhibitions.

THE SPACE FACTOR: How is the exhibit area to be divided up and allocated? What portion will be given over to permanent exhibits and how will this be divided up into subject matter? Will space be reserved for special exhibits, traveling exhibits or other activities?

PRIORITIES: Will the museum's resources (staff, money, volunteers) be concentrated on installing permanent exhibits and their refurbishing? Will emphasis be placed on producing in-house special exhibition using the museum's own collections or will traveling exhibits play a major role?

GOALS: Closely linked to priorities. What are the short-term and long-term goals of the exhibition program? If the permanent galleries are to be rebuilt over a period of several years, this is a long-term goal. Short-term goals are usually set on a one to three year basis, allowing for flexibility to ensure the museum will be able to respond to new situations and developments.

VISITORS: Who are the visitors expected to be? School children, students, local residents, and tourists– all have certain needs and expectations. Some museums are strictly tourist oriented while others are deeply involved in community and school programs and events. What level of participation will your exhibitions promote? See Nina Simon's Participatory Museum for an explanation of the four levels of visitor participation: Visitor as Contributor, Visitor as Collaborator, Visitor as Co-Creator, and Visitor-Hosted Projects.

FUNCTION: How does the exhibition program fit into the overall fabric of the museum's operation?

In addition to these factors, every institution will have its own set of circumstances that will suggest other factors to be considered in formulating an Exhibition Policy.