

How to Successfully Host a Museum on Main Street exhibition

Goals and Aspirations

Museum on Main Street is a partnership between the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), state humanities councils, and small museums in rural communities from across the nation. As a high profile, multi-layered project it can be as complex and beneficial as you and your community want to make it. It is the responsibility of SITES and your state humanities council to provide the tools for you to create the masterpiece. The true genius of this project is that you are in the driver's seat.

Hosting a Museum on Main Street exhibition provides a **unique opportunity** for your museum to stretch in new and different ways. Your first step in this process is to set some goals. Some ambitious goals! In your wildest dreams, what impact would you like to accomplish with this project? What are your long-term dreams for your organization and how can this project help you to realize your dreams? Maybe it is to

- X Develop new community partners
- X Make long-term institutional advancements and capital improvements to your facility
- X Explore new media outlets and reach new audiences
- X Find new avenues for financial support
- X Develop creative educational programs
- X Make inroads with cultural tourism
- X Learn about ways traveling exhibitions can help give your museum higher visibility

You are limited only by your imagination and energy level!

Project Overview

Between Fences is a small-format, limited security exhibition designed by SITES specifically for small museums. In collaboration with SITES, your state humanities council will bring the exhibition to six venues in the state for approximately six weeks each. Each host museum is encouraged to develop a local exhibit and other outreach and program activities. In addition, a representative from the host museum is required to attend a program workshop with the humanities council that will be held approximately six months prior to opening at the first venue.

A museum representative is also required to attend a SITES installation workshop held just before the opening of the first venue in the state.

Planning Committee

A proven methodology to fully implement this project in your community is to start by assembling a Planning Committee to develop a project plan for your museum and your town. The committee should include those individuals who the program coordinator believes will serve as the project's conduit to community leaders and resources. This is an idea and advocacy group--the people who solicit assistance by going out into the community, along with the museum staff, to build partnerships. The Planning Committee is responsible to:

- X Develop specific goals for the project on behalf of the host museum (a mission statement)

- X Oversee the development and implementation of a local exhibit and local programming
- X Plan and implement local fundraising
- X Plan and implement publicity
- X Evaluate the project --including *Between Fences*, the local exhibition, and all programming

Sub-Committees

Delegate! Delegate! Delegate! In order to accomplish your ambitious goals, sub-committees may be formed to work on different components of the project under the supervision of the Planning Committee. Specific goals established by the Planning Committee can be fully realized by the work of your sub-committees. The sub-committees may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- X Local exhibit planning sub-committee
- X Exhibit installation sub-committee
- X Program Development sub-committee
- X School/teacher sub-committee
- X Volunteer and docent training sub-committee
- X Publicity sub-committee

Please note that this exhibition support manual is designed so that different sections can be given to the appropriate sub-committee.

Exhibition Package

Your state humanities council and SITES will provide the following to each host museum:

- X *Between Fences* for approximately a six-week booking;
- X a grant to develop public humanities programs;
- X program workshop to discuss programming, publicity, fundraising, and technical assistance;
- X installation workshop to learn how to install the exhibition;
- X 50 full-color promotional posters and 500 postcards;
- X a multi-colored outdoor banner (travel with the exhibition);
- X exhibition support manual;
- X exhibition docent guide;
- X teacher's materials;

Each host museum is expected to:

- X commit necessary staff or volunteer time to plan and coordinate the exhibition and related programs;

- X create an exhibit on related themes specific to the local community for display in conjunction with *Between Fences*;
- X provide exhibit and program space;
- X fully publicize the exhibit and public programs in the local area;
- X develop public programs and activities in conjunction with the state humanities council;
- X provide travel to program and installation workshops for museum representative;
- X coordinate local fundraising and publicity.

Public Humanities Programs

Host museums are encouraged to present public humanities programs during the exhibit showing. The humanities are the stories, ideas, and writings that help us make sense of our lives and enhance our ability to think critically and creatively about our world. Through the humanities, we hone skills of inquiry, analysis, reflection, evaluation, and conversation. The humanities strengthen ties between people, between the past and the present, and between idealism and action. The humanities provide a framework for examining how we think, what we value, and what it means to be human.

Programs that encourage thoughtful consideration of these questions and provide the historical, social, and philosophical contexts with which to do so are at the core of the public humanities. The academic disciplines traditionally associated with the humanities include history, literature, language, linguistics, philosophy, jurisprudence, ethics, religious studies, archaeology, and the history and criticism of the arts. Interdisciplinary fields as American studies, ethnic studies, folklore, and women's studies are also considered as the humanities. The humanities programs presented by the host museum should provide information or insights from the humanities disciplines that speak to themes and issues in the *Between Fences* exhibition.

Museums may also choose to present other special events in conjunction with the exhibition.