

Museum on Main Street
2008 National Planning Conferences
Sharing Best Practices

Best Practices Model: Working with Partners & Committees

Daniel Carey-Whalen, Kansas Humanities Council

*MoMS Tour(s) That You've Coordinated (exhibition and year):*New Harmonies- 2008

How did extra effort(s) in this area come about? Needs identified in the state; among the local hosts, etc.

It seems for many states the need for good, reliable transportation for MoMS exhibits throughout their state is essential to a smooth exhibit. Some state councils rent vans and drive the exhibit themselves. Some hire companies. The list goes on. In previous years, Kansas hired a company that shipped the exhibit throughout the state, yet after several years of service, the contract was terminated. In that final year there was excessive damage to crates, they were consistently unrealizable for pickup and delivery, and were very little help with set-up. Also, as the Smithsonian exhibits became more sophisticated, Kansas communities felt they needed more assistance setting the exhibits up.

What council resources/expertise were you able to utilize? What partner resources/expertise?

Sometime in the past, the Kauffman Museum in North Newton, KS examined their strengths and saw a need throughout the state of Kansas that met their strengths. The strengths were three full-time exhibit staff and the need in Kansas was affordable traveling exhibits and a need for exhibit expertise throughout the state. So they bought a truck, made exhibits, and shipped them around the state. When KHC's contract with the above stated shipping company ended, we looked for a new shipper and started talking with the Kauffman. They had two things we need/wanted: a truck and exhibit expertise.

What were the steps involved in implementation?

Steps? Are you kidding?!?! It was all serendipity. After the last shipper, KHC began talking with institutions that used travel exhibits, such as ExhibitsUSA, Smithsonian, and others, asking them who they used for shipping. When we contacted Kauffman, knowing they used traveling exhibits, they replied, "We use ourselves." After a few more phone calls, agreements were agreed upon and contracts signed.

What were the results?

The results are a wonderful partnership and VERY, VERY pleased sites and project directors.

What adjustments (if any) did you make along the way?

Originally, David Kreider of the Kauffman only shipped the exhibit, but halfway through Between Fences, we realized that the host sites needed help setting things up. That's when David broke out the two-dimensional floor plan models that are now our claim to fame. I always describe these as "tinker-toys" but they are essentially models you can place on the ground to see how the exhibit will fit in your space before you even open up a crate. They are better than the old, MacGuiver duct tape method since you can move them around as you see fit.

What's been the short and long term benefit to the local hosts?

Piece of mind! The local hosts meet David at installation workshop and most of their fears of setting up the exhibit are quelled. Any reservations that persist are quelled when David arrives and sets up his two-dimensional floor plans. The plans enable the hosts to get a feel for how the exhibit will fit in their space. Also, since David was at the installation workshop and has set up the exhibit before, the local director needs not stress out about the installation.

What's been the short and long term benefit to the state council?

Piece of mind! KHC knows that a professional is handling all the details. We don't have to worry about damage, or late arrivals and we know that our sites are receiving the best quality service.

What advice would you have for other state tour coordinators trying to make a similar impact in this area?

Find a Kauffman Museum in your state or region. We live in a capitalistic country, where entrepreneurs like the Kauffman are often filling voids in demand. It might not be a museum. Talk with the people in your state who might be utilizing traveling exhibits and see how they ship them. Talk with larger institutions such as state historical societies; see if they might be interested in filling a need.

Do you have any files, forms, documents or digital images illustrating this component of your MoMS tour(s) that we could post on-line to share with others?

Would you be willing to serve as a mentor to other state coordinators, advising them on this topic? If so, please indicate the best way for them to contact you.

Contact me via email at: dan@kansashumanities.org