

Collections Building Blocks

Mission Statement

Vision Statement

Scope of Collections Statement



Museum Association of Arizona Webinar

January 11, 2023

Presenters

Brian Crockett (Two Headed Goat):

Bcrockettthg@gmail.com

Janice Klein (Museum Association of Arizona):

azmuseums@gmail.com

Museum Governance

Public Trusts

Public trust is the principle that certain natural and cultural resources are preserved for public benefit. In essence, it means the public owns the collections, and they should be kept available so the public can study them, enjoy them, and learn from them.

Governed by state and federal law

Guided by professional standards (“best practices”)

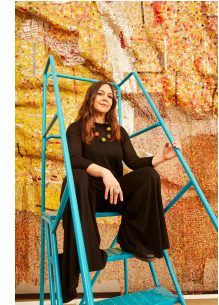


Museum is governed by the Board of Trustees (also called Directors)

Legally responsible for the proper management of the museum's (trust's) assets, which includes the collection.

Responsibility for the collections is generally delegated by the Board to the Director, who then delegates specific responsibilities to the staff

Board-approved collection management policies form the “agreement” between Board and staff on how that will be done

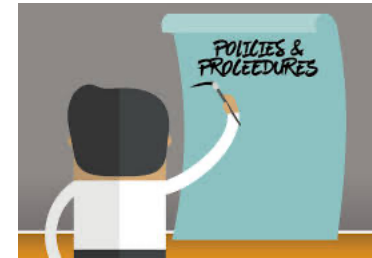


Collections Management

The goal of collections management is to make the collection usable

In order to facilitate collections use we need to know:

- what the collections are (documentation)
- where the collections are (inventory)
- how the collections may be used (policies and procedures)



Policies and Procedures

Policies

- define why a museum is in operation and how it goes about its business
- identifies the museum's professional standards for the care of its objects
- serves as a guide to the staff and as a source of information for the public

Policies are internal documents

- include legal requirements
- may follow professional guidelines

In general policies tell us who is allowed to do what

Procedures tell us how policies will be carried out



Collections Building Blocks



Mission Statement – why the museum exists

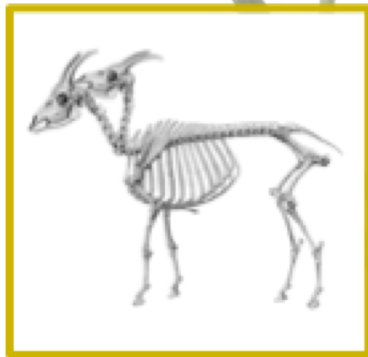


Vision Statement - goals for the future



Scope of Collections Statement – what the museum collects

Uncovering Your Mission & Vision



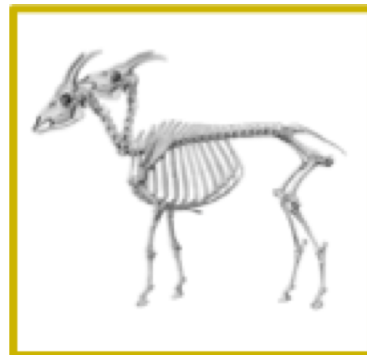
Why Do You Need a Mission?

Isn't it self-evident that museums are a good thing?

No Two Museums are Alike

No Two Museums Tell the Same Stories

No Two Museums Share the Same Values

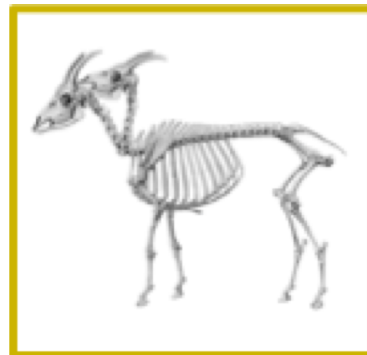


Why Do You Need a Mission?

AS TAX-EXEMPT ORGANIZATIONS YOU PROMISE TO
ADVANCE THE PUBLIC GOOD

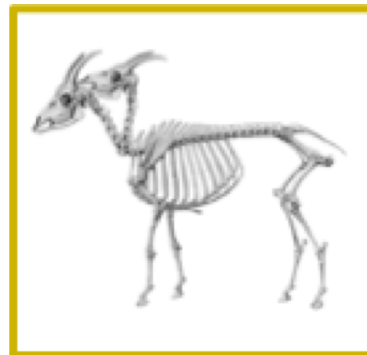
So **How Do You Do It?**

What good do you do?



Mission Statements. -- *What's the Point?*

- Unify Board, Staff, Volunteers & Donors
- Reinforce shared values & ambitions
- Guide Decision-making
- Necessary in short and long-term planning



SAMPLES:

Made-up gobbledygook (Avon)

“Our purpose sits at the heart of everything we do: we use the power of beauty to transform women’s lives for the better. The next chapter in our journey will amplify this purpose and ignite growth; driven by our talented people. We will accelerate our transformation with a focus on commercial model optimisation, a relationship selling framework, brand and innovation relevance, and a digitally-enabled, omni-channel presence.”

SAMPLES:

No identifying characteristics (Albertson's)

"To create an experience that pleases our customers; a workplace that creates opportunities and a great working environment for our associates; and a business that achieves financial success."

SAMPLES:

Could this be yours?

"It is our mission to continue to authoritatively provide access to diverse services to stay relevant in tomorrow's world."

Created by the [Mission Statement Generator](#) which recombines nouns, verbs, and adjectives into prototypical mission statements that are delightfully replete with meaningless corporate-speak.

A Good Example

Tarjimly

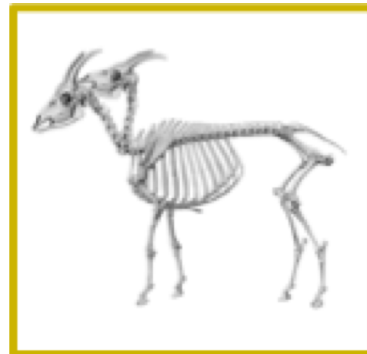
Our mission is to improve the lives of refugees and the efficiency of humanitarian services by eliminating language barriers.

WHY THIS IS STRONG:

Short & sweet; It's clear what impact they're aiming to have, who they're serving, and how they're doing it.

In All, Your Mission Should:

- Express a Need and a Solution
- Should be Succinct
- Should Show Your Passion & Determination
- Should Demonstrate Your Importance

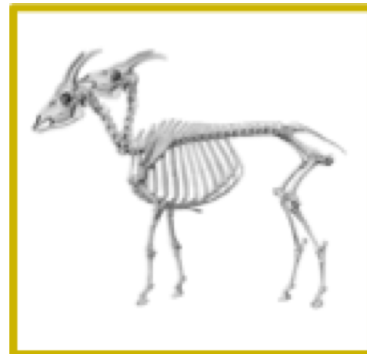


Can a Mission Be a Slogan?

YES!

And You'd Be Very Lucky if It Became a Slogan

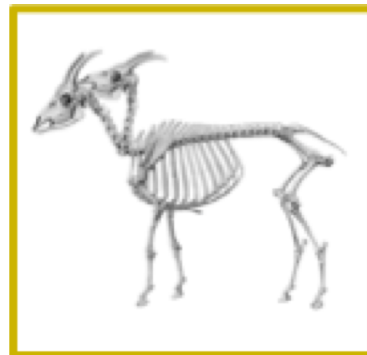
(But it needs to be more than a silly catch phrase)



VISION Statements

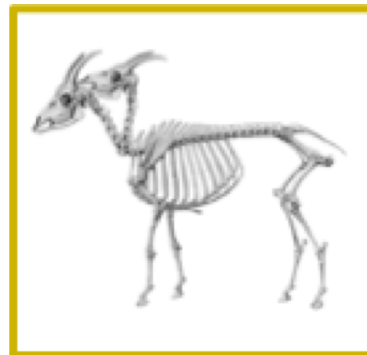
Are they Needed??

(Not Always)



Your VISION Statement

- Should complement your Mission
- Should be Prominent and Active
- Might describe a Preferred Future

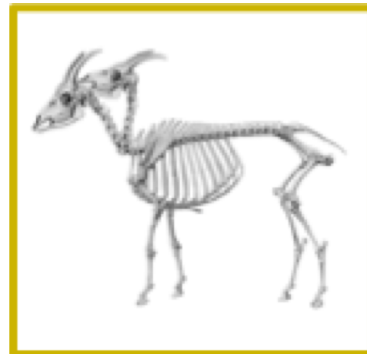


Your VISION Statement

One Sentence that describes an inspirational, long-term desired change resulting from your good work.

Must be Concise!

(No one wants a future that is boring)



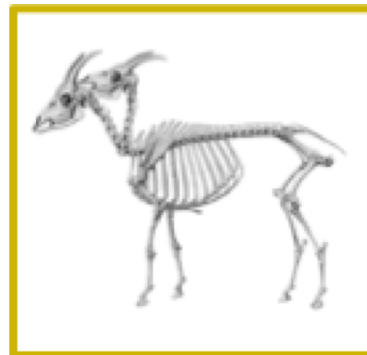
SAMPLE Vision Statements

- Alzheimer's Association:
A world without Alzheimer's
- The Nature Conservancy:
To Leave a Sustainable World for Future Generations
- Ducks Unlimited:
Wetlands sufficient to fill the skies with waterfowl today, tomorrow, and forever.

SAMPLE Vision Statement

Smithsonian Institution: *Shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world*

Chicago History Museum: *To serve as the primary destination for learning, inspiration, and civic engagement to connect people to Chicago's history and to each other*



How Do We Rewrite Our MISSION & VISION?

First, Commit to the possibility of change . . .

- Are you really willing to consider change?
- Do you want to understand where you're failing?
- Can you accept criticism?

(real change may come at a price – don't proceed if you're not ready – instead, build internal trust first)

How Do We Rewrite Our Mission & Vision?

Simple Steps:

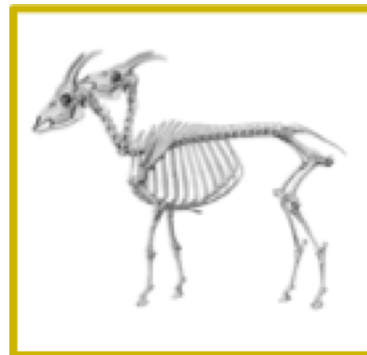
Engage your staff, board, advocates, and volunteers, over a month or so – have them ask ***everyone they meet:***

What do you like about the museum?

What don't you like about the museum?

Do you think the museum matters?

If yes, How? If no, Why not?



Then reach out to those who never visit the museum . . .

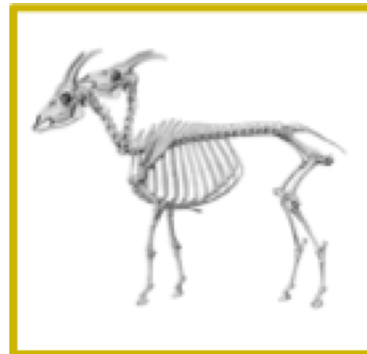


Do you know where the museum is?
Is it a good museum?
What do you like about it?
How often do you visit?
Is it worth my time?

How Do We Rewrite Our Mission & Vision?

Then strategically seek out segments of your community that are NOT engaged with the museum. Ask them the same questions and then ask how the museum could do better.

(Invite criticism. Listen closely, it will rock your world)



How Do We Rewrite Our Mission & Vision?

- **Meet & Repeat:** Have 2 or 3 conversations. No more. (Things won't get better with more time --- first impressions and warm exchanges are critical)
- **Gather** what you heard and meet up with fun, articulate, creative, and energetic people. Synthesize findings and hand off to wordsmith.

(Eat & Drink? – don't take this question lightly)

Accept the fact that you may not have the distance or skill set to see your museum's impact plainly; employ outside facilitator if needed.

So you've got your Mission & Vision

NOW WHAT?

- To motivate and unify staff and volunteers
- To guide decision-making & strategic planning
- To set goals and identify measures of success
- To reinforce shared values, norms, beliefs
- To attract new audiences and leaders.

Via AASLH, STEPS



Success

MERCURY CHAMBER ORCHESTRA

MISSION

To serve the community by celebrating the power of music—Baroque and beyond—through teaching, sharing and performing with passion, intimacy and excellence.

DiverseWorks

OUR MISSION

DiverseWorks commissions, produces, and presents new and daring art in all forms, through innovative collaborations that honor each artist's vision without constraint.





OUR VISION

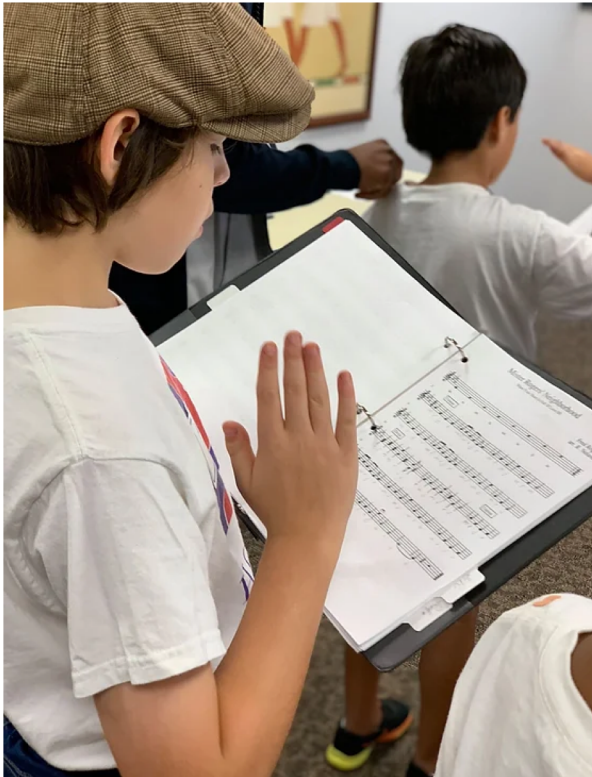
We honor freedom of expression as an essential tenet of a civil society and know that art carries an astounding promise for individual growth and insight.

Through sharp attention to artistic quality and creative action, DiverseWorks

- will invigorate Houston by fostering civic participation, cross-cultural understanding, and fueling innovation;
- will be a nationally recognized artist-centered leader in presenting compelling art that defies expectations; and will supply a steady array of stimulating installations, unlikely collaborations, and inventive happenings.

Houston Boy Choir

Success



Challenge: *What is Your Mission?*

Conducted interviews with all organizational participants:

Music Teachers, Boys, Administrators, Board Members, Donors, Organizational Peers, and Parents

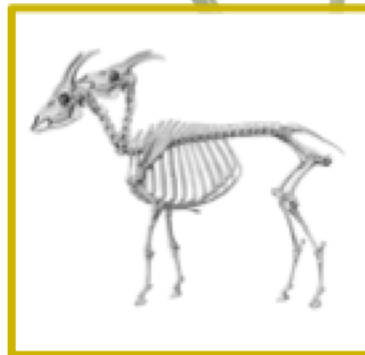
SUCCESS: Houston Boy Choir



We Build Men of Character Through Music.

Uncovering Your Mission & Vision

Brian Crockett
BcrockettTHG@gmail.com
801-910-1211



Scope of Collections Statement

What is a Scope of Collections Statement?

Comprehensive collection plan that defines the types of objects a museum collects

- why it does so

- what the collection includes

- what to add

- what not to add

- what may need to be removed from the collection

Defines an ideal collection – a goal rather than a description

What, Why and How of Collecting

What	Objects of Material Culture Natural or Scientific Specimens	3-dimensional 2-dimensional
Why	Preservation Educational use	You can't both perfectly preserve and use the same object at the same time. Any use of an object results in some lesser level of preservation.
How	Purchase Expedition Commission or Creation Donation (Trade, Bequest)	Active Passive

Why Limit Collecting?

Cost of collections processing and care

Museum resources

Space

Time

Storage materials

Special needs – environment, security, sensitive collections



Why Create a SC Statement?

Part of Board-approved policies

Ensures match between collection and mission

Improves donor relations – allows saying clear rationale for saying “no”

Meets professional standards

e.g., AAM Accreditation: “collections and/or tangible objects are appropriate for its mission”

Clarifies budgeting priorities for staff and collections care

Provides guidance for

Evaluation potential acquisitions

Use of collection (e.g., education or hands-on)

Deaccessioning

Creates a collection that is effective tool for programming, exhibitions and education

What goes into a SC Statement?

Rationale or “intellectual framework” for the collection

Assessment of the current collection

Limiting factors

Plan for future, including areas for increased collecting, and deaccessions



Intellectual Framework

Clearly established “big picture” vision for the entire collection

Primary Criteria

Place

Time period

Subject matter



Additional Criteria

Topics or themes

Object type

Cultural groupings



Assessment of Current Collection

Weaknesses

Gaps

Lack of fit with museum mission

Quality

Lack of provenience

Duplication



Strengths

Significance

Quality

Quantity

Completeness

Condition

Related collections, including documents and photographs



Limiting Factors

Limit collection by

Geography

Time period

Association with event, person or place

Type of material



Other possibilities

Size

Condition

“Significance”

“Museum Quality”



What Determines “significance”?

Types of significance:

Age

Meaning

Use

Owner

Monetary Value

Community connections

Story

History

Artist or Maker

Size or scope

Concerns relating to significance:

Who decides

Bias



Who Writes the SC Statement?

Board or Board Committee

Collections Staff: Curators, Collection Managers

Other affected museum departments:

Education, Development

Other stakeholders:

Museum members, Community members

Question to ask: What makes your community and museum significant

- What is different from other communities and museums
- What stories will you tell



What Can Happen Next?

Less collecting

Deaccessioning

Legacy collections

More active, less passive collecting

New audiences

Reaction from stakeholders

Better use of resources

Periodic review of SC Statement

Over time, the scope of collection may gradually drift due to influences of curators, directors, donors and other factors. In order to prevent confusion as time passes by, it's best to formally periodically revisit the scope of collection.

Think About

1. What do you collect?
2. What is your mission statement?
3. Do these match?



Resources

The AAM Guide to Collections Planning by James B. Gardner and Elizabeth E. Merritt (AAM 2004)

Guidelines for Writing a Scope of Collections Statement (California State Parks Archaeology, History & Museums Division Museum Services Section, 2009)

https://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/22491/files/guidelines_for_writing_scope_of_collections_statement_state_parks_ahm_march_2009.pdf

Three Examples Of Poetic Collecting Scope Statements from Active Collections: What We've Learned (NEMA Conference 2020)

https://nemanet.org/files/6516/0561/8328/Active_Collections_Handout_Poetic_Collecting_Scope_Statements.pdf

Worcester Vermont Historical Society Scope of Collections (2020)

Worcester has been and continues to be made up of people who have lived with determination, ingenuity, perseverance, and out-and-out quirky aplomb. We appreciate the varied personalities and backgrounds that make our community whole and vibrant, where we can all live together, comfortable in our individuality. We collect artifacts that reflect the heritage and particular history of this wonderful and quirky town.

Our collections tell the stories of:

- The land within the six-mile square that delineates the Town of Worcester: the Worcester Range and foothills, the North Branch valley, the brooks of its watershed, and at its heart, our village.
- Its people and their day-to-day lives.
- The traditions and celebrations that have grounded us.
- The community organizations that have woven us together.
- The working lives of people involved with logging and saw mills; dairy farms; trades and other small businesses; the stores; the milk farms; and the sundry pursuits of yesterday and today.
- How schools have anchored our town.
- The forces of change that have affected us.
- Families and individuals who have left their mark.
- And – the unexpected.