

Comm Outreach Group
Position Paper
re moving to wharf.

Side bar?

COMMUNITY OUTREACH GROUP

Several staff involved in working with community groups, cultural and other advisory boards have been meeting on a monthly basis. Our objectives are to support community outreach efforts, share experiences working with cultural groups and advisory boards, build on what's been learned, and increase awareness of some of the issues involved in creating and maintaining community involvement at TCM.

At this point we'd like to remind staff of our meetings in case you'd like to join in and/or receive notes of the meetings. Also, we're interested in being a resource to you. A set of notes and related materials is being collected in a community outreach notebook on Judy's desk.

The following are our recommendations and a draft position paper on community outreach at TCM. They also serve to summarize some of our discussions, and we hope will expand communication about this important aspect of museum work.

Let us know your interests and response.

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DRAFT - POSITION PAPER - COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Problem: To date there's been some unevenness in our approach to communities as we've often worked on a project by project basis almost always under pressures of little time and money.

With the move, as more and more outreach occurs, we feel its important to be more systematic--to even out some general aspects of our approach and some of the specific steps we take.

Goal: To maintain working relationships and contact with current communities and reach out to new communities.

Basic Principle: Building and maintaining these relationships is a two-way street with important benefits to both museum and community.

Museum benefits:

1. Ally with community
2. Expanded audience.
3. Maintain relevance of curriculum, exhibits, kits, etc.
4. Gain and maintain reputation.
5. Opportunity to personalize our cultural materials.
6. New development ideas.
7. Support letters and advisory boards for proposals.

Community benefits:

1. Access to TCM material resources.
2. Access to staff--resource help, educational expertise, ideas.
3. Chance to influence museum direction.
4. Visibility.
5. Proposal and project support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. COMMUNITY ACCESS THROUGH MULTILINGUAL SIGNING.

We're concerned that we welcome specific communities (ethnic, neighborhood, special needs) to the Museum/Wharf as well as the general public. We want to support all current and planned efforts to do this, and urge that we constantly question and evaluate what our message and level of access are for specific communities as well as the general public.

Suggestions:

1. Multilingual Signing in the E.C./R.C.--at least welcome signs in the front lobby of the E.C. in at least the key Museum/community languages: Italian, French, Haitian, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, MicMac. Additional languages would be great and would also provide a welcome to foreign visitors.
2. Information about how the museum works (presently the sign explaining staff functions) should be presented multilingually.
3. Bilingual introductory tours of the Museum should be offered--for community groups and foreign visitors.

3. and 4. might be accomplished through special funding of orientation and catalogue materials, which could be developed for both general and bilingual situations.

2. INCREASED STAFF AWARENESS OF THE TIME NEEDED FOR COMMUNITY OUTREACH.

We recommend that all staff involved in working with community groups plan in a percentage of their time to be used for community outreach, whether you are working on a particular project with that group or not. The need for time exists after a community based project ends, as well as before and during, so that contacts will be maintained. Having leeway in our schedules for phoning, informal conversations, attending community events, etc., will help us develop and maintain these contacts so that when the next proposal or project comes around we have a basis of good communication to build on.

Currently, developers do much of this on their own, after-work time. We urge that everyone recognize and plan for the amount of time required to create, build, and maintain community involvement.

3. WHAT DO WE OFFER COMMUNITY CONSULTANTS, COLLABORATORS, AND GROUPS? A SPECIFIC LIST OF BENEFITS THAT WE CAN ALL DRAW ON NEEDS TO BE DEVELOPED.

We recommend that a list of specific community benefits be developed which lists benefits to community groups and community consultants and which can serve as a contract (formal or informal depending on the individual staff's needs) for exchange of services.

This list might include: introductory tours for community groups, special community nights, reduced rates to consultants following projects, memberships, newsletters, minority hiring information, etc.

Though in many situations, community consultants are paid by project funding, there is a need for further recognition--it is impossible to pay everyone; people give more; project funding ends; many times we don't have funding for consultants; relationships develop into personal exchange of favors, or may begin this way.

4. STEPS IN APPROACHING A COMMUNITY--THE NEED FOR PLANNING AND COORDINATION

1. Coordination. In approaching community groups and institutions, for any purpose, its essential to find out what other TCM staff member works with that group and coordinate with them. (Let people know who you are in touch with through staff notes, etc. A list of community development projects and developers contacts will be kept in the Community Outreach Notebook).

Its very important that we not duplicate efforts and that we make use of one another's knowledge, contacts, and experiences with community groups.

2. Allow adequate lead time. For example--to involve community people in planning or evaluating new proposals; to enable other museum staff who are connected with a group you are trying to reach to plan their time to help you make connections.

3. Be clear and specific about what you're asking and what you're offering.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WORKING ON A PARTICULAR PROJECT--SHORT-RANGE THINGS THAT WILL HELP IN THE LONG-RUN.

1. Provide a chance for community consultants to become familiar with the whole Museum, so your project is seen in context.
2. Consult with more than one person (points of view) about that community's concerns. (Use of advisory boards is recommended, though there are several other models. Notes on these are being kept in the Community Outreach Notebook).
3. Allow adequate time. Plan in an extra measure of time to set up meaningful communication with community members and to allow revision based on community feedback.
4. In planning stages, plan in some specific outcome of the project that can go into the community when the project ends--either to the projects' consultants or to a community center. For ex. photographs, final reports, documentation, duplicate sets of materials.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS WHEN A PARTICULAR COMMUNITY PROJECT ENDS.

1. Prepare community contacts for the change in your schedule and commitments.
2. Clarify their role from here on--will you be in contact personally? Newsletter communication? Will their board continue to meet? etc.
3. One model: request that one or two individuals act as coordinators between museum and community--letting you know about community events, serving as interim advisors.
4. Make sure that all individuals who have worked with you are on all appropriate Museum mailing lists. (A newsletter of cultural projects is being planned.) Make sure they get memberships, reduced rates, or other benefits that are possible.