

**OKLAHOMA MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION
FOCUS GROUP STUDY REPORT**

PREPARED FOR:
OKLAHOMA MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this study was to gather input regarding the needs of Oklahoma museums and how the Oklahoma Museums Association (OMA) might improve or modify their programming and services to address those needs. The following objectives guided the study:

1. To identify the training and support needs of Oklahoma's museum community;
2. To evaluate current OMA programming and services as they relate to these needs;
3. To gather information to help plan future programs and services; and
4. To explore the barriers that prevent participation in OMA.

From the four focus groups conducted during the period June 27 – July 12, 2007, by the Bureau for Social Research (BSR) the following themes emerged.

Challenges Faced by Museum Leaders:

- Budgets and funding.
- All areas of marketing from getting information out to the public to attracting visitors and reaching niche audiences.
- Human resources and the need for qualified staff members.
- Working to educate board members and donors on the workings of the museum and their roles.
- Creating programs and exhibits that both educate and entertain.
- Competition for public interest and funding.
- Decrease in donors.
- Changing a culture that does not appreciate or value museums.

Training Topics:

- All current OMA training topics are considered beneficial and critical.
- Additional training topics were recommended:
 - Educating the board on museum and their role.
 - Time management.
 - Facility management of both physical environment and museum grounds.
 - Group dynamics.
 - Grant writing as a separate topic from fundraising.
 - Human resource management.

- Legal issues for museums.
- Sessions geared toward newcomers; museum management 101.

Program Delivery Methods:

- Online access to sessions; through webinar, video streaming, live chat or pod casts.
- Videos to train staff and volunteers.
- DVD/CD reference library of training sessions to access at a later date.
- Prefer face to face workshops.
- Conduct multiple sessions in different regions of the state.
- Broadcast trainings to satellite locations.
- Use as many different delivery methods as possible.

Suggestions and Ideas for OMA Services and Support:

- Facilitate networking opportunities with other directors and those with similar issues.
- Facilitate interaction with boards – training to help boards define and understand their role.
- Lobbying; act as advocate statewide with legislation and funding.
- Help promote museums as part of state culture to increase awareness and visitors.
- Act as a clearinghouse of resources for experts, service providers, and best practices.
- Network with state colleges and universities to connect museums with student workers, interns, and volunteers.
- Provide information and legislative updates about current political issues and activities related to museums.

Barriers to Attending OMA Trainings:

- Location of training; distance is too far from museums.
- No or little budget for training or travel.
- Not enough staff to be able to leave museum.
- Schedule of meetings conflicts with work day and museum events.
- Lack of management and board buy-in for training.

OMA Membership Barriers:

- Cost of joining is prohibitive when it is difficult to meet basic needs.
- Individual recruitment was desired.
- OMA membership is not perceived as relevant to a specialized type of museum.
- The full range of membership benefits was not presented.
- Difficult for large museums to see value of membership.

OMA Service Areas of Most Importance:

- Fundraising ideas and practices that work.
- Assistance with educational programming.
- Educating board on their responsibilities regarding fundraising.
- OMA help to promote museums.
- Clearinghouse of resources; disseminating information.
- Assistance with obtaining adequate facilities.
- Media and marketing help.
- Advocacy; provide legislative clout.
- Bring in a presenter to make multiple presentations in each region.
- Make workshops available online or on DVD.
- Provide networking opportunities.
- Change public perception of museums and change culture to appreciate museums.
- Assist with gathering data for assessment and planning.
- Act as a resource to connect museums with students and volunteers.

Purpose

The Oklahoma Museums Association (OMA) commissioned the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University to conduct a series of focus groups composed of Oklahoma museum directors, staff, and leaders. The purpose of this study was to gather input regarding the needs of Oklahoma museums and how the OMA might improve or modify their programming and services to address those needs. The following objectives guided the study:

1. To identify the training and support needs of Oklahoma's museum community;
2. To evaluate current OMA programming and services as they relate to these needs;
3. To gather information to help plan future programs and services; and
4. To explore the barriers that prevent participation in OMA.

OMA will use the results of this study to improve statewide programming for museums. OMA will also obtain information that will help them understand what benefits should be offered to attract non-member museums to OMA membership. The results of the focus groups will be examined by the OMA board of directors and published on the OMA website.

Methodology

Four focus groups were conducted during the period June 27 – July 12, 2007, by the Bureau for Social Research (BSR). Participants for the focus groups were selected and recruited by the OMA. The recruitment was accomplished following guidelines prepared by the BSR. Participants consisted of directors, staff members, and leaders from museums throughout Oklahoma. Some of the museums represented were members of OMA and others were non-members. The participants in the June 27 group, held at the International Photography Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City, were from small and medium sized museums that were members of OMA. The participants in the June 28 group, held at the Sheerar Museum in Stillwater, were from museums that were not members of OMA. The July 10 group consisted of representatives from large museums, both OMA members and non-members, and the July 12 group included representatives from member and non-member institutions as well as a student intern and another museum studies student. The July focus groups were conducted at the International Photography Hall of Fame in Oklahoma City.

Each focus group meeting lasted approximately 90 minutes. The first 30 minutes were reserved for lunch, which was provided by the OMA, and informal discussion. Sixty minutes were devoted to the formal focus group discussion. The largest focus group had eight participants while the smallest had three participants. A total of 24 museum leaders participated in the four focus groups.

An informational handout was provided to each participant (See Appendix A). This handout described the study, how participants were selected for the study, steps that

would be taken to protect their privacy, the voluntary nature of their participation, how the information gathered during the focus group would be used, and contact information for questions. Participants received a \$20 incentive payment at the end of the focus group sessions.

The question routes for the focused discussions were drafted by the BSR in consultation with the OMA. Questions were developed to address the specific project objectives. The focus group question route is provided in Appendix B.

Discussions were audio-recorded, and verbatim transcripts were made which did not include any participant names. Content analysis was then conducted for the purpose of identifying themes common across the groups. The focus groups were analyzed by two BSR staff members independently. The two analyses were then compared to enhance reliability of the findings. It should be noted that themes/remarks common across at least three of the four focus groups were classified as “Primary Themes,” whereas “Secondary Themes” were those that received significant attention during the group discussions but were not necessarily shared by the majority of the groups.

Findings

The participants identified several challenges that they face in their museum leadership capacity. These challenges were expressed during discussion prompted by the following question.

Question: All of you are museum leaders—either as directors or board members or in some other capacity. What are some of the challenges that you face in your leadership capacity?

Primary Challenges Faced by Museum Leaders

The following primary themes were shared by at least three of the four focus groups. When applicable, the challenges are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The challenges are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Budgets and funding.

“But that’s our main problem – getting the money to do the little things that we need done.”

“I think funding impacts what programming you can do, what programming is forced upon you.”

2. All areas of marketing from getting information out to the public to attracting visitors and reaching niche audiences.

“It seems like no matter what you do it’s hard to get people to the door, so you can advertise in newspapers, you can put it on the radio, you can market it to teachers, but you still have a hard time getting participation from the public.”

“I’d really say reaching your niche audience...how do you find those people who you know would be really interested in what you have to offer but how do you go about contacting them?”

Secondary Challenges Faced by Museum Leaders

The following secondary themes were not necessarily shared by the majority of focus groups, but they received significant attention during the discussions. When applicable, the challenges are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The challenges are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Human resources and the need for qualified staff members.

“It’s like you can train everybody but there’s still only one person here who knows what they’re doing.”

“It’s the fact that you can’t leave your museum. You’re giving tours; you’re doing the programming, whatever it is you have going on.”

2. Working to educate board members and donors on the workings of the museum and their roles.

“Educating your donors and your board about what your mission is and then understanding that the day to day operations are just as important as the flashiness of a big exhibit or a party.”

“Well just dealing, trying to help your board understand, for instance, that housing a collection is just as important as your, the exhibits, and so that’s one of the areas we may not get as much funding.”

3. Creating programs and exhibits that both educate and entertain.

“How do you create the education experience and entertain at the same time so that you can really catch people, like you say, with that experience?”

4. Competition for public interest and funding.

“I think we are all competing with Nintendo and Playstation and iPods and all the technological things that kids are interested in today.”

“So I think probably the area that we face the most challenges is the funding sources becoming more and more limited as there are more non-profits in the field not just museums, but everyone is competing for the same dollars”

5. Decrease in donors.

“So the people we’ve depended on every year to be the annual gift for a certain project is beginning to diminish and the younger generation isn’t able to pick up the slack at that point or they’re just not inclined to. We don’t know why.”

6. Changing a culture that does not appreciate or value museums.

“That’s what we really need help with, it’s bigger than any one museum, it’s a cultural thing and where do we get that...why do people not want to go to museums?”

“How do you overcome ‘museum’ being a dirty word?”

Suggested Training Topics

Participants were given a list of training opportunities currently provided by the OMA and were asked the following question. The training topic list is provided in Appendix C.

Question: How do these content areas relate to the needs at your institution (and to the challenges that you face)? Your own professional needs? Are these topics on target?

During all four focus groups, participants commented that all of the training topics listed are beneficial and critical. Current training opportunities specifically mentioned as pertinent were:

- Visitor services
- Website services
- Conservation
- Board management/governance

Participants were asked to suggest additional training topics:

Question: What other training or programming topics would you like OMA to offer?

The following additional training topics were mentioned as being useful for museum personnel. It should be noted that “educating the board on their role” was the only recommendation made by at least three of the four focus groups. All other topics were mentioned by fewer than three of the groups.

1. Educating the board on museum and their role.

“I see our board...is very ignorant of what the museum staff does and what it takes to really the day to day administration management of all these different areas.”

“Help the board members realize what their job is as a member.”

2. Time management.
3. Facility management of both physical environment and museum grounds.
4. Group dynamics.

“Just a class on group dynamics or how to get people working with each other.”

5. Grant writing as a separate topic from fundraising.

“Grant writing, finding grants, applying for specific projects. I mean it fits into a lot of the categories but it’s not on its own individual one.”

6. Human resource management.

“Maybe under administration, one of the things they might talk about that would be helpful is human resources, the new, all the new rules and just keeping up with...what we have to do as managers, how we take care of our staff in order to get a better staff.”

7. Legal issues for museums.
8. Sessions geared toward newcomers; museum management 101.

“It would be great for people who are trying to break in just so they have a source where they know how to do all these things and so they don’t have to Google every little thing, trying to find it.”

Primary Program Delivery Methods

The participants identified several preferred program delivery methods. This discussion prompted by the following question.

Question: What types of program and training delivery would be ideal for your setting?

The following primary program delivery methods were shared by at least three of the focus groups. When applicable, the methods are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The methods are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Online access to sessions through webinar, video streaming, live chat or pod casts.

“Something like that where people from all across the state could tap into a training session that was going on and listen to the presenters at the same time, be part of the dialogue that’s maybe taking place.”

2. Videos to train staff and volunteers.

“So you could do it in a staff meeting or get your people together and say...watch the video or listen to the CD...and then you set up a time to discuss it.”

“A good set of basics that would help and train volunteers.”

3. DVD/CD reference library of training sessions to access at a later date.

“It would be nice, you know, if you could just take a video out for three weeks and look at it and watch and get something out of it and then just send it back.”

“So that if you can’t get somebody to come, at least send me an expert video DVD.”

4. Prefer face to face workshops.

“But of course, face to face stuff is wonderful, and workshops, and those are absolutely the best, but for those of us in small facilities, it’s how do you get away and go do that?”

Secondary Program Delivery Methods

The following secondary program delivery methods were suggested during discussion but were not mentioned by a majority of focus groups. When applicable, the methods are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The methods are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Conduct multiple sessions in different regions of the state.

“It would be a lot better for smaller institutions to have to drive an hour or hour and half to attend something that’s in our local region.”

2. Broadcast trainings to satellite locations.

“Maybe you had something in Lawton, Tulsa and Oklahoma City that was broadcast in all three locations so that people closer to those areas could come to one central location.”

3. Use as many different delivery methods as possible.

“I would much rather go to a workshop than to have it online or to receive a video about it, but in a pinch I will take the information any way I can get it.”

“If I could get it on demand, you know, have them mail me a DVD or look at it online or somehow get it that way I think that opens the door to more training opportunities.”

Primary Suggestions and Ideas for OMA Services and Support

Participants were asked how the OMA could support museum directors and their staff:

Question: What could the OMA do to [better] support your work as museum leaders?
To better support the work of your staff? [i.e., what do you need from the OMA?]

The following primary areas were shared by three or more focus groups. When applicable, the suggestions and ideas are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The suggestions/ideas are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Facilitate networking opportunities with other directors and those with similar issues.

“Sometimes one of the best parts of all the classes is just meeting other people in the area with similar issues.”

2. Facilitate interaction with boards – training to help boards define and understand their role.

“If the OMA could maybe talk to all the museums, I think there are a lot of good ideas of different things that we do for our board, you could put together a kind of, a sample board packet.”

3. Lobbying; act as advocate statewide with legislation and funding.

“I’d like to see them doing a little lobbying for us.”

“There’s a push on now to get museums some federal formula grants...and there are a lot of organizations that are helping lobby and push that. And OMA is not one of those organizations and I’d like to see that.”

4. Help promote museums as part of state culture to increase awareness and visitors.
5. Act as a clearinghouse of resources for experts, service providers, and best practices.

“If the OMA was providing more clearing house type services for special needs, so that I might have the opportunity to find someone in the state of Oklahoma

who has the same peculiar set of circumstances that I might be facing, so if they could provide that.”

Secondary Suggestions and Ideas for OMA Services and Support

The following secondary areas were shared by two of the focus groups. When applicable, the suggestions and ideas are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The suggestions/ideas are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Network with state colleges and universities to connect museums with student workers, interns, and volunteers.
2. Provide information and legislative updates about current political issues and activities related to museums.

“If they could do some lobbying like that or just networking to let us know what we can do because the Arts Council is always sending out e-mails letting you know what’s going on”

Barriers to Attending OMA Trainings

Participants were asked about barriers that prevent them from attending OMA training and education opportunities:

Question: What are some of the barriers that make it difficult for you and your staff to take advantage of OMA training opportunities?

The following themes were shared by two or more focus groups. When applicable, the barriers are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The barriers are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Location of training; distance is too far from museums.
2. No or little budget for training or travel.

“We have a large budget but we have no money for traveling to any workshop or seminars of any kind in the next year.”

“I mean, if I can get away, I’ll go anywhere on my own dime to get the information.”

“And so a lot of times a majority of it ends up coming out of my pockets. You know we may get registration recovery but like she said, it may be half way across the state, so if I want to go I will have to drive and find a hotel, so I don’t always get to go.”

3. Not enough staff to be able to leave museum.

“But of course, face to face stuff is wonderful, and workshop, and those are absolutely the best, but for those of us in small facilities, it’s how do you get away and go do that?”

4. Schedule of meetings conflicts with work day and museum events.

“I would much rather things be scheduled on my personal time because I can go. I don’t have my boss telling me, ‘Oh you can’t be gone that day’”.

5. Lack of management and board buy-in for training.

OMA Membership Barriers

Participants in the non-member focus group were asked about barriers that prevent them from joining the OMA:

Question: What is it that prevents you from joining OMA?

The following issues were mentioned by the group. When applicable, the barriers are illustrated by direct quotes from the focus groups. (The barriers are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Cost of joining is prohibitive when it is difficult to meet basic needs.

“I have a hard time just getting them to pay me!”

2. Individual recruitment was desired.

“If they had taken some proactive step, even if it was just a phone call, even if it had just been a letter.”

3. OMA membership is not perceived as relevant to a specialized type of museum.

“I’m sitting here, 90 days out from opening a door on a brand-new museum, and I did not perceive an absolute need to affiliate myself with this group, and I should have.”

4. The full range of membership benefits was not presented.

5. Difficult for large museums to see value of membership.

OMA Service Areas of Most Importance

Near the end of the focus group discussion, participants were asked to name the one area where they thought the OMA could provide the most help:

Question: Of all the things that were mentioned today regarding needs that the OMA might be able to assist you with (training, support, services), which one is the most important to you?

While there were no clear common themes, the following issues were mentioned by one or more focus group. (The service areas are numbered to allow ease of reference. The order does not necessarily reflect priority.)

1. Fundraising ideas and practices that work.
2. Assistance with educational programming.
3. Educating board on their responsibilities regarding fundraising.

“It’s just that we can’t get the board to start getting real serious about it.”

“The fundraising and then the board and their relationship to it and you know talking to them and getting them to see what their responsibilities are.”
4. OMA help to promote museums.

“I live in a very rural area and it’s important to me for OMA to help me make people aware of my museum and help promote my museum.”

“The OMA does a very good job I think, statewide, on generating some media attention for the museums for international museum day, national museum week, or whatever, but everybody is kind of left to their own devices after that.”
5. Clearinghouse of resources; disseminating information.
6. Assistance with obtaining adequate facilities.
7. Media and marketing help.
8. Advocacy; provide legislative clout.
9. Bring in a presenter to make multiple presentations in each region.
10. Make workshops available online or on DVD.
11. Provide networking opportunities.
12. Change public perception of museums and change culture to appreciate museums.

“I think we were at one time, you know sort of these hoity-toity elitist places, but now there’s a huge shift in wanting to be much more visitor friendly regardless of what demographics you may fall into. But it’s re-educating people in our own communities that that’s what we are now; I don’t think they know that.”

13. Assist with gathering data for assessment and planning.

14. Act as a resource to connect museums with students and volunteers.

Appendix A: OMA Focus Group Informational Handout

Oklahoma Museums Association Focus Groups Informational Handout for Participants (Yours to Keep)

What is this about?

The Oklahoma Museums Association (OMA) has commissioned the Bureau for Social Research at Oklahoma State University to conduct a series of focus groups composed of Oklahoma museum directors, staff, and leaders. The purpose of these focus groups is: (1) To identify the training and support needs of Oklahoma's museum community; (2) To evaluate current OMA programming and services as they relate to these needs; (3) To gather information to help plan future programs and services; and (4) To explore the barriers that prevent participation in OMA.

How did you get my name?

You were selected to participate in this focus group by OMA. Both OMA member and non-member museums were asked to participate.

Protecting your privacy:

You should know that any information you share during the discussion will be kept confidential, and your comments will never be connected to your name. Any services you may currently receive from OMA will not be affected by your comments. We will record the discussion; however, when transcripts are made, NO names (or other identifying information) will be included in the transcript. Instead, all participants will have a "P" written before their comments (and the moderator's comments will be preceded by an "M"). Once the transcripts are made, the recordings will be destroyed.

Your participation is voluntary:

Participation in this focus group is voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation at any time with no penalty.

How will this information be used?

OMA will use the results of the focus group study to improve statewide programming for museums. OMA will also know what benefits should be offered to attract non-member museums to OMA membership. The results of the focus groups will be examined by the OMA board of directors and published on the OMA website.

Questions:

If you have questions about these focus groups, you may call: Dr. Celeste Campbell (Bureau for Social Research, Stillwater) 405-744-6701.

If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

Appendix B: OMA Focus Group Question Route

[Moderator provided a brief introduction explaining the purpose of the focus groups and how participants were selected.]

I. Opening question

1. Please tell us your name and how long you have been involved in museum work.

II. Intro/transition question(s)

2. All of you are museum leaders—either as directors or board members or in some other capacity. What are some of the challenges that you face in your leadership capacity?

III. Key questions

3. [Examine a list of approximately 10 content areas from recent OMA training and programming activities. See Appendix B.] How do these content areas relate to the needs at your institution (and to the challenges that you face)? Your own professional needs? Are these topics on target?
4. What other training or programming topics would you like OMA to offer?
5. What types of program and training delivery would be ideal for your setting? For example, classroom delivery, web-based format, blog, myspace page.
6. [Optional if time permits] What could the OMA do to [better] support your work as museum leaders? To better support the work of your staff? [i.e., what do you need from the OMA?]
7. [For members and non-members] What are some of the barriers that make it difficult for you and your staff to take advantage of OMA training opportunities?
8. [For non-members only] What is it that prevents you from joining OMA? [Probe: What would OMA need to do to make it worth your while to join?]

IV. Ending questions

9. Of all the things that were mentioned today regarding needs that the OMA might be able to assist you with (training; support; services), which one is most important to you?
10. [Assistant moderator give a brief summary of key questions discussed.] Is this an adequate summary?
11. The purpose of this discussion is to help evaluate current OMA programming and to determine future programming needs. Have we missed anything in our discussion today that you feel should be included?

Oklahoma Museums Association

Training Opportunities:

1. Exhibition Design
2. Collections Management/Cataloging
3. Conservation
4. Special Events/Public Programs (non-school)
5. Educational Programming (teachers and students)
6. Volunteer Management
7. Visitor Services
8. Board Management/Governance
9. Computer/Technology
10. Development/Fundraising
11. Marketing/Public Relations
12. Administration/Finance
13. Strategic or Long-range Planning
14. Web site Services