

Federal Formula Grants for Museums

PRESS RELEASE

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NEW SURVEY ON STATE MUSEUM ASSOCIATIONS AND ADVOCACY

(March 20, 2008) A survey of state museum associations, conducted by the State Readiness Committee of the Federal Formula Grant Coalition, reveals new data on the advocacy role of state museum associations and existing state agencies that provide funding specifically for museums. The purpose of this survey was to obtain a clearer picture of the role state museum associations play in representing the interests of museums in state legislative affairs, the kind of funding programs that currently exist through state governments, and the training needed to enhance and improve these activities. The results of this survey will assist the State Readiness Committee in organizing and preparing a training program for state museum associations in Fall 2008.

The following are key findings of the survey:

A majority of state museum associations are active in state affairs and serve as advocates for museums.

- More than half of state museum associations perform legislative or advocacy tasks, including
 - monitoring bills and taking positions on museum-related legislation (67.7%);
 - writing letters of support for state agencies (61.7%); and
 - attending public/government hearings that pertain to museums (61.3%);
- Three-fourths of state museums associations (74.2%) characterize themselves as active in state affairs. Approximately half (51.6%) claim to be “somewhat active”, 12.9% are active, and one in ten (9.7%) are “very active” in state governmental affairs pertaining to museums.
- Almost half of state museums associations (46.7%) are sought out by state officials, agencies, and/or reporters for feedback on legislation concerning museums.
- Only two museum associations indicated they do not perform any tasks pertaining to state advocacy for museums.

More than a dozen state museum associations are proactive in their advocacy efforts and have a position on the board responsible for legislative affairs.

- Two-fifths of state museum associations host a legislative day or month, meet with elected officials on museum-related topics, and have a position on the board responsible for legislative affairs.
- One-fifth (19.4%) of state museum associations have a staff member and/or lobbyist assigned to state legislative affairs.

Almost two-fifths of the states in the country have competitive grant programs specifically for museums.

- Almost two-fifths (38.7%) of the museum associations indicated that their state currently has a state agency or commission that administers grants specifically for museums.
- All of the grant programs specifically for museums (100%) are competitive with a formal application process and two-thirds (75%) are peer-reviewed.

Competitive grant programs through the states for museums fund a variety of programs or services.

- More than four-fifths (83.3%) of the grant programs through the states fund exhibits and 66.7% support education programs and collections/conservation.
- More than half (58.3%) fund capital projects.
- Half of the programs (50%) support general museum operations.
- Two-thirds (41.7%) fund planning projects.

The vast majority of state museum associations are very interested in training programs to improve the way they advocate for museums.

- Four-fifths indicated they are “very interested” in grassroots advocacy training and 16.7% say they are “somewhat interested”.
- More than half are “very interested” in learning more about legislative topics affecting nonprofits (60%), meeting with elected officials (56.7%), the difference between lobbying and advocacy (55.2%), and the most important state offices/agencies to develop a relationship with (51.7%).

The preferred format for advocacy training for state museum associations is a multi-session “webinar” series with a variety of speakers.

- Given many different formats, from face-to-face meetings to conference calls, the majority of state museum associations indicated they are interested in webinars, with more than half (58.6%) saying they are “very interested” and 37.9% indicating they are

“somewhat interested”. Only one respondent indicated they were not interested in participating in a webinar series on advocacy training.

- A lack of funds for travel and time were the most common barriers for preventing participation in advocacy trainings.
- A significant majority (80%) of the respondents indicated they would like the training to include a variety of speakers, including staff and board members from state museum associations, staff members from national associations, and key people from outside the museum field.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

All known state museum associations, 48 in total, were invited to participate by completing an online survey. The survey was conducted in January and February 2008, with 31 respondents, and administered through an online surveying software provider (www.surveymonkey.com).

ABOUT THE STATE READINESS COMMITTEE

The State Readiness Committee is a committee of the Federal Formula Grant Coalition and co-chaired by Malinda Horton, Executive Director of the Florida Association of Museums, and Celeste DeWald, Executive Director of the California Association of Museums. The purpose of the State Readiness Committee is to provide training and mentoring opportunities for state museum associations in the areas of advocacy and legislative affairs. The Federal Formula Grant Coalition is a group of fifteen national associations, four regional museum associations, and 38 statewide organizations that are advocating for the creation of a federal formula grant program for museums. For additional information, see <http://www.aaslh.org/htopics.htm>.

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