



Smithsonian Education Strategic Plan | 2004–2009

EXPLORE, DISCOVER, LEARN



Smithsonian Institution

SMITHSONIAN EDUCATION MISSION STATEMENT

To engage and inspire diverse audiences in a lifelong exploration and understanding of art, history, science, and culture.

Goal Statements

- Produce and deliver Smithsonian educational experiences, services, and products that are informed by education research, Smithsonian expertise and collections, and that meet the educational needs of the Institution's audiences.
- Become an organization that is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and in improving practices to reflect new insights.

NOTE: Based on these broad goals, each unit will develop its own education plans. Some strategies and actions will be accomplished collectively and some will be unit specific.

Objectives and Action Steps

GOAL 1

Produce and deliver Smithsonian educational experiences, services, and products that are informed by education research, Smithsonian expertise and collections, and that meet the educational needs of the Institution's audiences.

OBJECTIVES

1.1 Create pathways to engage diverse audiences during and apart from the (physical) museum experience.

1.1.1 Identify target Smithsonian audiences.

1.1.1.1 Conduct audience research to determine needs of target groups.

1.1.1.2 Collect and disseminate research findings to increase target audience participation.

1.1.2 Create educational experiences, services, and products that are informed by research, Smithsonian expertise and collections, and that meet the educational needs of the Institution's audiences.

1.1.2.1 Support the creation of innovative programs by piloting a Smithsonian Education Innovation Grant program.

1.1.2.2 Recognize innovation in education by piloting a Smithsonian Education Achievement Award program.

1.1.3 Deliver high-quality educational experiences, services, and products that are informed by research, Smithsonian expertise and collections, and that meet the educational needs of the Institutions' audiences.

1.1.3.1 Develop and deliver public programs to serve Smithsonian target audiences.

1.1.3.2 Develop web strategies for on-line delivery coordinated with other forms of distance learning.

1.1.3.3 Develop and deliver educational print materials that support school-based curricula.

1.1.3.4 Develop options for an aggressive product development and licensing plan emphasizing products that create ongoing revenue streams.

1.1.3.5 Develop a public relations strategy with capacity to serve Smithsonian educational programming.

1.1.3.6 Increase use of Smithsonian programs, services, and products by developing and implementing marketing strategies.

1.2 Identify, develop, and disseminate validated systems and models for evaluating the relevance and effectiveness of Smithsonian-based education programs. Assess progress in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives.

1.2.1 Review and disseminate criteria for evaluating Smithsonian educational programs based on standards endorsed and employed by educational professionals.

1.2.2 Establish a subcommittee of the Smithsonian Council of Education Directors (SCED) to work with the Office of Policy and Analysis to investigate resources and techniques for inexpensive, audience-driven surveying and evaluation.

1.3 Build partnerships that inform development of educational resources and opportunities and leverage them to expand effectiveness.

- 1.3.1 Appoint a pan-Institutional advisory board to support and promote Smithsonian education.
- 1.3.2 Work with partners to increase awareness of Smithsonian education programs, products, and services and to secure financial resources.
- 1.3.3 Build partnerships with public and private organizations such as schools, universities, libraries, government agencies, professional associations and media companies, and consider creating formal educational alliances.

1.4 Increase financial and staffing resources to expand educational programs and increase participation.

1.5 Develop standards of excellence and innovation for the Smithsonian and provide leadership by sharing them with the larger museum community.

1.5.1 Develop Smithsonian standards for museum education publications, websites, and programs.

1.5.2 Plan a pan-Institutional event every two years about learning in museums to showcase Smithsonian research and scholarship in education.

GOAL 2

Become an organization that is skilled at creating, acquiring, and transferring knowledge, and in improving practices to reflect new insights.

OBJECTIVES

2.1 Strengthen the role of education at the Smithsonian Institution.

2.1.1 Put an education element in the performance plans of unit directors.

2.1.2 Include educators as members of exhibit teams, in website development, publications, and programs, from beginning stages to completion of projects.

2.1.3 Develop unit education strategic plans aligned to Institution-wide goals.

2.1.4 Report to the Secretary once a year on how/what the Institution is doing in education.

2.1.5 Develop an internal public relations strategy with capacity to serve Smithsonian educational programming.

2.1.6 Offer incentives and rewards by piloting a Smithsonian Education Innovation Grant program and a Smithsonian Education Achievement Award program. [See also 1.1.2.1 and 1.1.2.2]

2.2 Conduct research on learning and teaching through museums.

2.2.1 Inventory and document existing education research programs at the Smithsonian.

2.2.2 Work with the Office of Policy and Analysis to research proven education practices in museum settings.

2.2.3 Improve communication and collaboration about education among Smithsonian units.

2.2.4 Determine needs and gaps in Smithsonian education.

2.2.5 Implement programs to fill research gaps. [See also 1.1.2]

2.2.6 Increase the amount of outcome evaluation conducted at the Smithsonian.

2.3 Transfer knowledge on best practices and learning through museums.

2.3.1 Offer forums on research in education that include curators, researchers, and directors, so that “research-based” becomes an integrated characteristic of Smithsonian education programs. [See also 1.5]

2.3.2 Offer professional development opportunities for Smithsonian education staff. These opportunities could include collaborating with forward-thinking institutions with acknowledged expertise in education and cognitive research.

2.4 Improve practices to reflect new knowledge and insights.

2.4.1 Develop baseline data, maintain a database on Smithsonian education programs, and make it available to all staff.

2.4.2 Determine areas of strength in Smithsonian education.

2.4.3 Focus on one audience each year or one delivery method and acquire and transfer best practices in that topic area to Smithsonian education programs.

2.4.4 Conduct pilot projects to test new knowledge and innovative practices. [See also 1.1.2.1]

2.4.5 Assess progress in multiple ways and from multiple perspectives.

Education Strategic Planning Committee

Anacostia Museum & Center for African American History and Culture • Robert Hall
Arthur M. Sackler Gallery | Freer Gallery of Art • Carson Herrington
Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage • Betty Belanus
Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum • Dorothy Dunn
Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden • Linda Powell
Horticulture Services Division • Lauranne Nash
National Air and Space Museum • Maureen Kerr
National Museum of African Art • Veronika Jenke
National Museum of American History, Behring Center • Nancy McCoy and Andrea Lowther
National Museum of the American Indian • Pamela Woodis
National Museum of Natural History • Gloria Chernay and Harold Banks
National Portrait Gallery • Carol Wyrick
National Postal Museum • Esther Washington
National Science Resources Center • Sally Shuler
National Zoological Park • Lynn Dolnick and Jennifer Buff
Office of Government Relations • Pherabe Kolb
Program for Asian Pacific American Studies • Gina Inocencio
Smithsonian Affiliations Program • Alma Douglas
Smithsonian American Art Museum • Susan Nichols
Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory • Philip Sadler
Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies • Stephanie Norby, Bruce Craig,
Stevie Engelke, and Tracey Enright
Smithsonian Center for Latino Initiatives • Magdalena Mieri
Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education • Don Williams
Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center • Sharon Shaffer
Smithsonian Environmental Research Center • Mark Haddon
Smithsonian Institution Libraries • Lynne Altstadt
Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service • Frederica Adelman and Laurie Trippett
Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute • Georgina DeAlba, Elizabeth King, and Stanley Heckadon
The Smithsonian Associates • Mara Mayor and Carol Bogash

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