

Museum Exhibition Planning

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Exhibit Design Process - Bishop Museum Exhibits

(NOTE: This document addresses exhibit design & production parts of a project only; it does not address other project management needs such as fundraising, educational programming, opening event, publicity, etc.)

1. Schedule and Preliminary Budget

- Exhibit proposal approved by senior management and put in schedule with indication of topic, size, and opening date.
- How much will this cost?
- What **kind** of exhibit id desired? Do you want people to be busy with their hands or hands off? Do you want video? Artifacts in cases?
- Determine target audience.

2. Content Development

- Whole project team starts working together here.
- Define **objectives & themes** including the "**takeaway**" message expressed as a "**Big Idea**" statement
- **Front-end evaluations**-- tell you what your audience know and expects about the topic, their preconceptions, attitudes and assumptions.
- Decide on **title**.
- Develop **project schedule**. Working backwards from opening date, decide deadlines for project benchmarks: preliminary floorplan, final approval, first draft text, etc.

3. Floor Plan(with optional design model)

- Fit your concept ideas into **space** -- What will fit? How much **space** will be allocated for each section and how will they interrelate?
- Once basic floorplan has been decided, set up **keying structure**: Section A, display A.1, etc. (subunits will follow later, e.g. photo A.1.d(4) to whatever depth is needed for each unit.)

- space planning
- flow & pacing
- big ticket items
- keying system

4. General Design

- Logo development (can't do until title has been determined!)
- Make a **sample board** to give the feel you want using cutouts, fabric swatches, pictures, etc. (e.g. of tone: scientific, kiddy-like, Hawaiian)
- Type design: mock up a graphic panel (nonsense type with sample fonts, colors, etc.)
- Decide **motifs and consistent threads** to unify the exhibit visually (e.g.

- logo
- color
- finishes
- feel, tone
- typestyle
- motifs

use logo on all signs, use all aluminum/perf metal for a high-techy look, trail signs for an outdoorsy look)

5. Rough Design & Feasibility Assessments

- Work out **more detailed design** for each keyed area using sketches
- Present to content person, get feedback on how well design supports main & subordinate points.
- Define all exhibit elements(text, graphics and interactives)
- Research/resolve **technical** options.

Who can make what? How hard/easy are your design ideas?

Can you make it in-house? Talk to vendors, ask time/cost questions.

- Assess **feasibility: time, cost, practicality.**
- Start files of:
 - a) **needed elements**
 - b) **estimates**(How much will things cost?)
 - c) **task lists**(Who are key people?)

- What's feasible?
- select major accents
- cost/benefit analysis
- start compiling lists/estimates

6. Budget /Task worksheets

- Break down units into **tasks** that need to be done.
- Decide **who** will do each task & **hours** needed
- Decide what to **job out** and which **vendors** to use.
- List & **estimate** cost items to create a projected budget. Compare with original budget.

- tasks
- hours
- compare quotes w/budget
- make cuts if needed!

7. Final Approval

- **Reconcile** any differences between plans & realities, and get final approval so that there will be no more major changes.

8. Keyed Layouts

- **Fully define** design of each display
- **Draw up** each area to specify sizes and designate where text/graphics will be so writers can visualize the **context** they're working in.

9. Research/Writing Label Copy

- For each component outline the **main point** and **subordinate** points you wish to cover.
- **Research** and **write** those points.
- Pass draft copy by designer
- **Edit**, submit final copy for production.

10. Production Organization

- Issue **assignments** -- carpenters, painter, electricians, preparators, conservators, graphic artists, other department.

- **Inventory** cases, prop, equipment needs.
- **Tracking sheets** to follow:
- **Paint schedule, Electrical needs?**

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- assign tasks- inventories- tracking sheets |
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Have good **Organizational Skills** so everyone knows what is going on

11. Construction Documents

- Plans/drawings for vendors • Plans/drawings for in-house fabrication
- Issue purchase orders • Delivery schedule.

12. Display Fabrication

- Conservation of artifacts • Props • Mounts • Cases • Graphics

13. Installation

- Gallery preparation: wall panels, painting, lighting, electrical feeds, furnishings. Ensure all is done before bringing in artifacts and graphics.

14. Maintenance

- Remember that the exhibit is "new" to each new visitor, so daily checks on the display to ensure all is fine. Repair or straighten out any displays.

Good Luck in your future exhibition!