

Traveling Exhibitions: The Nuts and Bolts Are In; Let's Travel

by Michelle Torres-Carmona

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Whatever the reasons for developing a traveling exhibition, even the best of ideas will go awry for lack of planning. The decision to focus on budgets and contracts in this presentation was culled from the feedback we received from last year's session on traveling exhibitions. This year's panelists provided attendees with instructive tools and techniques that could be applied to their own traveling exhibition programs. Our seasoned panelists represented a diverse mix of museums and perspectives. Cathy Ferree and Tamara Wooton-Bonner discussed the nuts and bolts of budgets while Whitney Owens and I focused on contracts.

Building Budgets

Underscoring the message, *Fund Before You Build*, our speakers shared these key elements of a budget: capital expenses, maintenance, marketing, staffing, and market value. Encompassing these core elements will assist in developing a sound budget, even down to the last postage stamp. It's the small things we forget to include that can wreak havoc on a project if not factored in at the beginning stages.

Whether it's your first time up to bat or you're a seasoned pro, it's important to remember that some elements of developing traveling exhibitions are repetitious. There are standard line items such as research and development pre-design, design and production, photographic services, publications production, special events/public relations, educational activity and materials, travel, transportation, exhibition tour maintenance. It's important to work smart, observe other museums and traveling exhibition services, and get estimates. There is no sense in re-inventing the wheel, and you're going to need all your strength to get through this process.

Research and planning are crucial. You must do your homework; there's an expense for everything: e.g. books, videos and DVD's needed to research the exhibition idea. You should also include the fees for consulting or contracting services which might include a content specialist, a conservator, a designer for the concept drawings, maybe even an advisory board. Depending upon the size and scope of the exhibition, you may elect to create a prototype before moving into production. This sometimes can be an invaluable opportunity, allowing the project team to review the overall goals of the exhibition, ensuring everyone is on the same page. Prototyping can also aid in determining the overall size, scale and structure of the project, and provide information on whether you might need to scale back. If the budget allows, a prototype for moderate to large exhibitions can avoid costly mistakes.

The "must have" exhibition will need promotional materials to market to potential venues. A graphic designer will be needed to get the right look. Depending upon the location of your overall design team, be sure to factor in the cost of travel. Determine how often and where the project team will meet. Although some meetings can be conducted via conference call, and many phone systems now have conference call capabilities, the cost of the conference call and set-up will also be an expense if this service is not available. Don't forget you'll need to feed everyone since the team will be working through lunch. Sandwiches cost too. Of course you'll also need money for your development staff. How else are you going to pay for this "must have" exhibition if they don't secure a sponsor?

Okay, you've done your research, now you're

at the design and production phase which includes exhibit furnishing (walls, cases, vitrines); typography/silk-screening; interactives; and audio/visual equipment (monitors, CD/DVD players). The “must have” exhibition will most definitely include the “must have” object which comes with a price. There may be loan fees; conservation needs; and costs for matting, framing and mounts. You will also need to budget for packing and crate construction, and that’s before the show has even shipped to the first venue. The whisk of a magic wand will not get the work done. Staffing is also a factor. In addition to some of the players previously mentioned, you might also need a photojournalist or perhaps a photo researcher. The latter will be racking up fees for rights and permissions for the fabulous photographs needed for the “must have” exhibition.

What would a traveling exhibition project be without a few ancillary publications: brochures, catalogues, posters, and postcards? Maybe the graphic designer hired for the marketing materials can also produce the brochure. If the project calls for bilingual materials it’s best to secure a designer who can also provide the translation; if not, that’s another expense right after the line item for someone to proof and edit the brochure. Be sure to include the review of the script as well, again maximizing the services of the project team. After you’ve produced these fabulous publications, you’ll need someplace to store them. It may be off-site if there’s no space at your facility. Let’s not forget the cost of shipping the exhibition. Whether it’s a one-time only cost to the first venue or you’ve elected to cover shipping costs for the entire tour, be sure to include the cost of insurance. If you elect to have an event, there’s a cost for producing those fancy invitations;

and remember the stamps. The public relations department will need some money for advertising and press kits, maybe even catering for the press preview. In addition to budgeting for the travel needs of the project team, don’t forget transportation for the exhibition: incoming objects from the lender, publication freight and storage during the course of the tour, and dispersal after the completion of the tour.

A key component for all traveling exhibitions is tour maintenance, i.e. all costs to maintain or repair the exhibition components once fabricated. This includes refurbishment; consultants/contractors to maintain or repair the exhibition; and registrarial supplies and materials.

Lastly, remember to factor in a contingency plan, because Murphy’s Law will always prevail in this business.

Traveling Exhibition Contracts

A contract between two parties, in this case, the lender and borrower, is designed to protect both. It should first include the basics, acknowledging that the AAM Standard Facility Report (SFR) has been submitted and that the site has been approved; submission of the SFR is a standard practice in the industry. Other basic items include all fees associated with hosting the exhibition, such as rental and shipping fees; the payment procedures and due dates; and any late fees and additional costs. You might want to include the possibility of fees for storage or for express shipping to the next venue because the venue elected to close the show early or late. You will also need a clause about altering the tour schedule or changing the venue or storage location without prior approval.

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The contract should outline any special requirements for installation and display including general security; specific protections and controls; the exhibition space; environmental requirements; storage and preparation rooms; and storage of exhibition and crates. The use of the standard facility report is designed to ensure the borrower and the exhibition are matched according to staffing and space needs.

The specifics of the contract should include shipping and artifact care; incoming/outgoing loans; unpacking; installation and packing procedures; and the timely submission of condition reports. And don't forget to include any required purchase of supplemental exhibition materials by the host venue.

Including a cancellation clause by the organizer and by the venue protects both parties. Also include terms for insurance for the content of the exhibition; general liability; and an indemnity clause. Your contract should include language about copyright and ownership. You've worked hard at branding your name; the last thing you want is someone using or changing it without prior approval. Terms should address copywriting the contents of the exhibition; any merchandise; logos and text; print and electronic materials. If you allow changes and substitutions, the contract must specify what's acceptable and what constitutes the review/approval process. If you received a check from a generous sponsor, make sure the credit language is spelled out to ensure accuracy. Other sponsor issues to consider might be national vs. local and industry exclusivity. You don't want the leading cola companies competing with each other on the outside banner enticing visitors to come see your wonderful traveling exhibition. Lack of proper credit can affect the sponsor's decision to support your next exhibition. Lastly, and everybody's favorite... Legalese. Does the contract comply with the laws of the places and entities involved? There may be special circumstances for state-owned, university, or federal institutions.

You'll gain invaluable experience as you plan the funding, budgeting, and contracting for your "must have" exhibition. Happy travels. 🌟

The Budget

1	REALLY GREAT EXHIBITION	
2	2008-2009	
3		
4	Salaries and Benefits	
5	Curatorial Staff	\$ 25,000.00
6	Exhibition Planning Staff	\$ 15,000.00
7	Education Staff	\$ 17,000.00
8	Registration and Conservation Staff	\$ 20,000.00
9	Sub-Total	\$ 77,000.00
10		
11	Expenses	
12	Registrarial Expenses	\$ 150,000.00
13	Curatorial Expenses & Travel	\$ 14,500.00
14	Installation	\$ 20,000.00
15	Marketing	\$ 15,000.00
16	Education	\$ 25,000.00
17	Catalogue Expenses	\$ 50,000.00
18	Contingency	\$ 27,000.00
19	Sub-Total	\$ 301,500.00
20	TOTAL	\$ 378,500.00
21		
22	Fee (Includes Hard Costs + Portion of Staff Costs) x 2	
23	Venues: \$	114,250.00
24	Pro-Rated Costs x 2 venues: \$	75,000.00
25	TOTAL COSTS PER VENUE: \$	189,250.00
26		
27	TOTAL REVENUE (FEE & PRC X 2): \$	378,500.00

Figure: A sample exhibition budget.