

Museum on Main Street 2009 National Planning Conferences Sharing Best Practices

Incorporating MoMS Tours with Teacher Institutes and Other Council-Conducted Programs

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MoMS Tour(s) That You've Coordinated (exhibition and year): Barn Again in 2004 & 2005, Key Ingredients in 2006 & 2007

What needs did you identify among your local hosts that led you to develop this component of your MoMS tour? Or, how did this all come about?

The Minnesota Humanities Center has been coordinating Teacher Institutes and other professional development offerings since the 1990's. We have always looked for ways to connect the various programs and resources that we provide, and MoMS exhibits created a variety of opportunities for us.

What council resources/expertise were you able to utilize? What partner resources/expertise?

For Barn Again, we developed a 2 day Teacher Institute prior to the exhibit opening in Minnesota. One of the workshop leaders (Lisa Thompson) had developed the educational materials for the national exhibit, and another presenter (folksinger Charlie Maguire) conducted programs at all MN sites. For Key Ingredients, we hosted an historical dinner prior to the opening for educators, funders and the public – mainly for promotional purposes. For the upcoming Between Fences, we have coordinated two 2 day Teacher Institutes with themes related to Between Fences – one on Canada and the other titled Where is America. For every previous MoMS exhibit and for our next three exhibits, we have/will contract with folksinger Charlie Maguire to conduct a program at each Minnesota site that includes working with an individual elementary school class (on music related to the exhibit theme) that is followed by an all-school concert with the class joining Charlie on stage followed by a public concert in the community (again with the class on stage).

What were the steps involved in implementation?

For all the above workshops/events, they began with Humanities Center staff with different responsibilities (e.g., MoMS, Teacher Institutes, Communications) meeting to discuss how to develop new program ideas that would blend in different components. This frequently led to collaborating with individuals and organizations in some new ways. While humanities content for these ideas was important, another important factor was also public relations/marketing.

What were the results?

Better overall agency planning – we've been successful in taking individual programs (like MoMS) out of silos, and finding ways of taking these programs and looking for ways to blend them with our other professional development, resources and community programs.

What adjustments (if any) did you make along the way?

Staff positions have been revised frequently as new program offerings are being considered and developed. Agency budget issues (which led to some staff layoffs) also impacted our MoMS work, as our level of support to host sites has fluctuated at times.

What's been the short and long term benefit to the local hosts?

Our host sites have become more involved in other aspects of our programming. Examples include applying for Lifelong Learning grants, hosting an Authors in Communities program, hosting a Fathers Reading Every Day (FRED) program, and hosting an off-site weeklong Teacher Institute.

What's been the short and long term benefit to the state council?

These enhanced relationships with host sites have greatly assisted us in improving our statewide presence, which is extremely beneficial to an organization with a statewide focus but with limited staff. It has also helped us develop a stronger group of scholars/presenters that we can use in a variety of program areas.

What advice would you have for other state tour coordinators trying to make a similar impact in this area?

Look for ideas from other states, then look inside your state and the other programs offered by your state humanities council to explore options.

Do you have any files, forms, documents or digital images illustrating this component of your MoMS tour(s) that we could post on-line to share with others?

- Agenda for the *Barn Again* Teacher Institute – that includes additional details on the presenters, texts used, program ideas and field trips
- Lyrics, music and recording of “Key Ingredients” song written and performed by Charlie Maguire (would need Charlie’s permission but I’m fairly sure he would agree)

Would you be willing to serve as a mentor to other state coordinators, advising them on this topic? If so, please indicate the best way for them to contact you.

One of the most valuable components in MoMS is sharing experiences and ideas with MoMS staff and representatives from other state humanities councils – so we’re not all reinventing the wheel. So if I can help in any way, please contact me at tom@minnesotahumanities.org.