



DIVERSITY COALITION STRATEGIC AGENDA – Final Draft

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Mission Statement

The AAM Diversity Coalition is an ad hoc group formed to represent, recognize and embrace the increasingly diverse constituencies that member museums serve or seek to serve, and to ensure greater representation and leadership from such constituencies throughout the museum profession. The Coalition advances this mission through programming, networking, leadership initiatives and scholarships.

I. INTRODUCTION

In June of 1998, the American Association of Museums (AAM) announced the establishment of a special coalition to increase diversity and multicultural awareness in museums and cultural organizations. The AAM Ethnic Coalition brought together members of the AAM Asian Pacific American Professional Interest Committee (PIC), the AAM Latino Network PIC, the AAM Native Americans and Museums Collaboration PIC, and the Association of African American Museums. This multicultural group expanded in May 1999 to include the AAM AIDS Network, the AAM Alliance for Gay and Lesbian Concerns PIC, the Council of American Jewish Museums, and the AAM Universal Design, Accessibility, and Services Committee and was renamed the AAM Diversity Coalition.

Diversity includes all characteristics and experiences that define each of us as individuals: race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, language, class, age, employability, education, geographic location/origin, physical abilities, and the diversity of the

Representatives from the Diversity Coalition meet monthly in Washington, D.C., to develop strategies for increasing diverse perspectives within AAM's programs and services, including the annual meeting and professional education seminars. Since the creation of the coalition, the 2000-2001 annual meetings have presented over sixty-five sessions that focus on multicultural issues in museums, the majority of which were developed by coalition members.

The coalition also has raised in excess of \$10,000 for scholarships to facilitate the participation of ethnic minorities and other under-represented groups in annual meetings and professional education programs of AAM. As a result, the association has awarded 35 scholarships to museum professionals from diverse backgrounds and interests to attend the annual meetings and professional education seminars in 2000-2001.

“Museums exist to celebrate the richness of the diverse communities that we serve...”
Donald Duckworth,
Director, The Bishop Museum,
Hawai’i

At the annual meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, May 10-14, 2000, Freda Nicholson, chair of the AAM Board of Directors, and Irene Hirano, vice chair, met with the leaders of the AAM Diversity Coalition for a dialogue. Members of the coalition discussed their concerns about the association’s commitment to diversity in all of its activities, including increased resource allocation to affect systemic change that includes AAM pan-organizational accountability to advance diversity issues.

At this meeting, the coalition leaders requested board participation in a strategic planning meeting to discuss diversity issues in depth and to outline a plan of action for the association leaders. Immediately following the November 2000 AAM board meeting in Washington, D.C., a group of participants from the AAM Board of Directors interacted with representatives from the AAM Diversity Coalition in a two-day strategic planning meeting.

II. METHODOLOGY

On November 17-18, 2000, a group of volunteers from the AAM Board of Directors met with leaders from the AAM Diversity Coalition to identify and discuss diversity issues of concern to museums in the United States. The group worked collectively to establish priorities and to identify key issues that affect the future of the diversity of museums and their communities.

To help guide these discussions, *New Visions: Tools for Change*[™], an innovative dialogue and discussion process was used throughout the meeting. Developed by the AAM for not-for-profit cultural organizations, *New Visions* is a process of

inquiry and strategic thinking that helps groups of people to work collectively.

It provides a framework for new ways of thinking, interacting, communicating, and planning for a “learning organization,”—one committed to continuous cultivation of ideas, attitudes, and abilities—in other words, a framework for a commitment to making change a positive, generative force that permeates the organization. With *New*

“Museums are allies with other community-based institutions—educational institutions, libraries, public television—in changing attitudes about diversity.”
Ann Mintz,
Director,
Berkshire

Visions, a group can learn how to make decisions that move an organization toward broad-based improvement and change.

There are four principals that guide the *New Visions* approach:

1. Dialogue is a form of communication that encourages learning based on mutual respect.
2. Assessment helps participants consider their current situation.
3. Vision stimulates thinking about future directions for change.
4. Action mobilizes change.

“Diversity is a reality. The next step is to address how the strengths of diversity can and should be promoted as an asset to museums.”
Hartman
Lomawaima,
Associate Director,

Using these principles, the AAM board/DivCo group began by identifying issues surrounding the topic (see Appendix A). The group narrowed this list to the eleven most critical issues for the next two to three years (see page 7). On the second day, the group assessed the current situation for each issue, envisioned what could be achieved by the year 2004, identified three priority issues, and recommended five action steps based on these priorities to serve as an Agenda for Action.

III. AGENDA FOR ACTION

AAM Strategic Agenda

To help museum anticipate and repond to issues so that they may succeed inserving communities' changing needs.

Continue to work to promote diversity in museum staff, programs, governance, and audiences.

- a) Reaffirm and adapt AAM policy statements to encourage museums, as appropriate, to diversify their staffs, boards, and volunteer groups.
- b) Encourage the AAM's three Councils and other affiliated groups to incorporate greater diversity into their memberships, programs and goals.
- c) Seek to provide diverse nominees for the AAM Board through the Nominating Committee.
- d) Seek and appoint members from diverse backgrounds to serve on AAM committees.
- e) Assist museums to reach audiences from diverse backgrounds through programs and educational opportunities.
- f) Seek and appoint members from diverse backgrounds to serve on AAM committees.
- g) Continue the scholarship program for AAM's annual meeting, and other professional education programs, with a priority given to museum professionals of color.

The group used the above citation from the AAM Strategic Agenda as a guide to identify the following eleven statements as the most critical issues facing museums with regards to diversity:

Eleven Statements

- America's museums as institutions collectively recognize and respond to the full diversity of America.
- Museums welcome change and are willing to adopt that change and adapt their policies and programs.
- Museums have a strong sense of stewardship in preserving the cultural heritage of the broad diversity of the American community.
- Museums recruit and retain members of governing bodies that reflect the diversity of the community.
- Museum governing bodies clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in leading an organization that serves a diverse community.
- Museum volunteers are representative of the full diversity of the community.
- Museum volunteers and their organizations are open and willing to change to reflect community diversity and its values.
- Museum leaders have assumed the responsibility of nurturing the next generation of leaders that better reflect the diversity of their communities.
- Museum programming is relevant and responsive to the diversity of our communities.
- Museums are allies with other community-based institutions (especially education and libraries, public television, cultural heritage sites, scientific organizations)
- Museum communities embrace and exercise ownership in their museums as diverse organizations and as community resources.

IV. PRIORITIES

From this list, the group identified the following priorities for the next three to five years:

- Museums recruit and retain members of governing bodies that reflect the diversity of the community.
- Museum governing bodies clearly understand their roles and responsibilities in leading an organization that serves a diverse community.
- Museum leaders have assumed the responsibility of nurturing the next generation of leaders that better reflect the diversity of their communities.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

From the list of priorities, the participants developed a list of five key action steps for fiscal year 2002, making use of current resources.

- Involve the Museum Trustee Association and other associations involved in non-profit governance issues in the AAM Diversity Coalition's initiatives and activities.
- Initiate a conversation with the Accreditation Commission [and other Programs for Museum Advancement & Excellence] about incorporating principles of diversity in the accreditation process.
- Encourage funding organizations to incorporate in their guidelines diversity in museum governance.
- Initiate a mentoring program specifically designed for museum professionals from diverse backgrounds.
- Develop an enduring mentoring program that creates long-term relationships on multiple levels of museum administration to make diversity systemic.

The group also developed the following list of recommendations for advancing diversity initiatives throughout the AAM and other organizations, some of which will require additional resource allocation. Consequently, these have not been prioritized and will require additional discussion between the AAM board, staff, and the diversity coalition.

- Formalize policies around diversity issues within the AAM, for both members and staff.
- Build social capital in the museum field through peer review programs of the AAM.
- Commission a white paper directed and organized from a conference addressing diversity.
- Examine and influence diversity issues in the new Museum Assessment Program module on governance.
- Involve the Institute of Museums and Library Service (IMLS) in advancing diversity issues through leadership grants and awards.
- Propose community dialogues around diversity issues to be funded by IMLS.
- Propose funding community/museum exchanges to promote diversity in museums.
- Develop programs and products that assist small museums to target diverse markets for collections and promote diverse interpretations of their collections.
- Develop high school internships and mentoring programs for museums.
- Develop annual meeting programs that promote museums as a viable occupation.
- Develop and support a national media campaign to promote museums as diverse educational organizations.
- Create a national museum exchange program.
- Develop an International Partnerships Among Museums (IPAM) module with a special focus on diversity issues

- Include graduate and undergraduate students in both museum specific and discipline specific programs.
- Strategize about how to successfully include groups and individuals external to the AAM membership.
- Seek increased funds for museums to recruit and retain diverse staff members.
- Create and endow a sabbatical program for senior staff.
- Create more internship and scholarship opportunities for professionals entering the field.
- Develop a “best practices” publication around diversity in museums.
- Develop and market programs and products to a more inclusive museum community.
- Develop a bibliography of resources on diversity issues in the workplace for museums.
- Encourage funding support to develop local consortiums to address diversity issues.
- Promote funding to encourage thinking and writing about the profession and diversity.
- Develop programs to assist rural and low-income communities to access museums via the Internet.

APPENDIX A - Participants

Project Personnel

Manager: John T. Suau, Manager, Meetings, Professional Education & Diversity

Facilitator: Jerold Kappel, Director, Development

Assistant: Ingrid Denis, Special Assistant, Policy and Programs

AAM Board of Directors

Lynda Bourque-Moss, Director, Western Heritage Center

Thomas E. Chavez, Director, Palace of the Governors, Museum of New Mexico

W. Donald Duckworth, President, Director and CEO, Bishop Museum, Hawaii

Irene Hirano, Director, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles

Hartman Lomawaima, Associate Director, Arizona State Museum

Patricia Miller, Executive Director, Illinois Heritage Association

Ann Mintz, Director, Berkshire Museum

Claudia Oakes, Assistant Director for Operations, Utah Museum of Natural History

Terrie Rouse, Executive Director, African American Museum of Philadelphia

A.T. Stephens, Vice President for Programs, African American Museum of Philadelphia

AAM Diversity Coalition

Laurie Baty, Deputy Director of Collections, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Mary Brady, Liaison, President, Integral Design Consulting Group

Bruce C. Craig, Chair, Director, Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies

Louis Hicks, Director, Alexandria Black History Resource Center

Pollyanna Nordstrand, Exhibits Planner, Harpers Ferry Center

Susan Secakuku, Program Specialist, Community Services Department, National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution

Stacey Suyat, Program Specialist, Smithsonian Institution, Office of the Provost

José Ortíz, Manager, The Cloisters (The Metropolitan Museum of Art)

Vilma Ortíz, Assistant Manager, Discovery Room, National Museum of Natural History

Barbara Stratyner-Cohen, Curator of Exhibitions, The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

AAM Staff

Edward H. Able, Jr., President and CEO

Victoria Garvin, Assistant Director, Professional Education

Dean Phelus, Director, Meetings and Professional Education

Karen Topping, Peer Reviewer Manager

Patricia Williams, Vice President, Policy and Programs

APPENDIX B

To provide context and structure to the ensuing dialogues, participants were asked to examine the past ten years of developments around diversity, from the perspectives of society and the museum field. The analysis was framed in five-year intervals, from 1990 to 1995, from 1995 to 2000, and then a status quo analysis was made for the year 2000. Following this analysis, participants developed a list of critical issues for 2000 to 2005.

Environmental Scan: 1990-95Society

- Americans with Disabilities Act
- Affirmative Action
- Age-ism
- Education
- Economic Recovery
- AIDS (workplace issues)
- Healthcare issues
- Choice of language use (regional language use restrictions)
- Political Correctness

APPENDIX B – Environmental Scan: 1995-2000

VI. Society

- Economic recovery
- Economic polarization (i.e., growing gap between upper- and lower- classes)
- Emergence of a nouveaux riche class
- Global economy (NAFTA)
- Technology booms
- Home environment
- Dot.com economy
- Accelerating concern for public education
- “Values” debate
- Backlash against affirmative action
- Fast track language
- Immigration issues (denial of services)
- Highly publicized hate crimes
- Gay protest/gay backlash
- Domestic partnership
- Distribution of the AIDS “cocktail” (new medical treatments that assist HIV+ patients survive)
- More money for AIDS research
- Optic technology (cell phones, satellites)
- Revisionist history
- Graying of America – Boomers turn 50
- First U.S. president from non-WWII generation
- Increase of drug testing in workplace
- Decline in crime and increase in incarcerations and executions
- Sexual harassment lawsuits on the rise
- Reorganization of private and public sectors
- Republican Revolution –Budget cuts in NEA, NEH, CPB
- Government shutdown
- Minority/Majority Issues –“Browning” of America
- Environmental movement – Green industry boom

APPENDIX B - Environmental Scan: 2000

Society

- More economic polarization
- Fear of globalization
- 1995 issues/attitudes hardened
- Economy flat
- Large gaps between societal groups
- Two-income families
- Full employment
- Acknowledgement that “people” are most important resource
- Third world embraces technology
- Economic uncertainties—technology field
- Energy costs on the rise
- Rise of ‘gated’ communities
- Diverse foods in the economy
- Conglomeration of ‘diversity’
- Continued decline in public education
- Self-employment increases
- Women-owned businesses
- Awareness of world health issues
- New definitions of family
- Employment competition
- Chronic disease
- Telecommuting
- Youth and technology
- Population movement—re-urbanization
- Gentrification

APPENDIX B - Environmental Scan: Critical Issues of Diversity 2000-2005

- Training museums' governing bodies about the values of diversity
- Increasing the diversity of museum volunteers
- Change in operating procedures for museums to address diversity of staff
- Increased training for staff to address diversity in the museum
- Better training about "how" diverse staff can work together
- Diversity in museum studies programs
- Interest groups influencing values and activities
- Accessibility issues for virtual and actual museum programs
- Workforce development
- Relevance of programs to diverse audiences
- Change in senior management
- Responsibility to nurture next generation of museum professionals
- Union impact (their agendas push diversity)
- Better understanding of audience(s)
- Understanding the community
- Multi-language issues
- Nature of the museum experience
- Conflicts serving diverse aspects of the community

APPENDIX C – Questions and Issues Raised

- Does a museum have to be reflective of the diversity of the United States or of its specific community?
- What if the museum does not value diversity?
- Is there a value component to diversity?
- How have museums actually changed?
- Is the increase of more diverse staff a result of the increase of more culturally specific museums?
- It was noted that although racism exists among Americans (African Americans and Anglos), there is also much racism within different cultural and/or ethnic groups.

