SCALING PROJECTS & BEST PRACTICES TO FIT YOUR SMALL MUSEUM

A ROUNDTABLE WORKSHOP
WHAT WE'LL COVER IN THIS SESSION

Scaling down from a big idea, project or best practice to meet the needs of your own organization and your audience, no matter your size.

• The theory of scaling for your organization.
• The process of scaling.
• Tips for scaling projects and best practices, including exhibitions, education, collections, and marketing.
THEORY OF SCALABILITY

- **Scaling** is adapting successful policies, programs, and projects from different places in a way that works for you or your organization that lets the big idea reach a greater number of people.

THEORY OF SCALABILITY – IS SOMETHING SCALABLE?

- From a reputable organization that has a history of doing good things
- Has happened or is proven to have good results
- Meets a need
- Implements best practices
- Simple, easy to implement
- Relevant to your mission
- Testable, can be reversed or walked back if needed

THE PROCESS OF SCALING

1. Identify what it is that you want to scale.

2. Establish why you want to scale it for your organization.
   1. What purpose does it serve?
   2. What is its outcome/impact?
   3. What will it do for your organization and audience?

3. Break down the best practice recommendation or project into its pieces and parts.
   1. What are the important details?
   2. How was it made/created/developed?
   3. How does it function?
THE PROCESS OF SCALING

4. Determine what parts you can use and adapt.
   1. What will work best for your organization and your audience?
   2. Is there anything you can improve upon?
   3. Consider your resources and your audience.

5. Think about the parts you don't need.

6. Lay out a plan for what you will do to make it happen
   1. What are the next steps?
   2. What resources do you need?
   3. Refine the idea/project to fit your budget, size, space, staffing, etc.
EXAMPLES

Scaling of Projects and Best Practice Recommendations
EXHIBITIONS

Megan van Frank, Utah Humanities
PROJECT: CREATE OWN INTERPRETIVE EXHIBIT AS COMPANION TO NATIONAL EXHIBITION

- National story pitched to general audience
- **Big Idea & sub-themes** are broad & widely relevant
- Uses up-to-date **scholarship & research**
- Content **structured** discretely
- Attractive & visually stimulating **design**
- Presents content using **variety of interpretive techniques** (text, objects, images, audio, video, interactive components)
- Topic lends itself to a variety of public **programming options & partnerships**
SCALING DOWN: Exhibitions

- How can we leverage our existing resources & priorities for research, collections care, community relationships & partnerships?
- Define our own audience, interests, learning goals
- Their themes inform our Big Idea & content structure -- just smaller!
- Still use up-to-date scholarship & research
- Create simpler design -- use free design software (eg. Canva)
- Present content using a variety of techniques -- just fewer!
- Utilize passive programming in-gallery (eg. self-guides)
- Reframe existing public programming to meet current needs (eg. same kids story-time but with our exhibit-related theme)
NEXT STEPS: Exhibitions

- **Involve others** in project planning (eg. staff, volunteers, community members)
- Conduct **original research** on collections
- Seek funding to **hire expert(s) to help** with specialized work (eg. research, design, object mounts)
- Incorporate **additional interpretive techniques** (eg. audio, video, interactives, participation, publications)
- Increase **accessibility** (eg. multilingual, large-print labels, sight-lines, touch items)
- Utilize **active programming** in-gallery (eg. tours)
- Design **new programming** to attract new audiences
EDUCATION

Virginia Catherall, Utah Museum of Fine Arts
BEST PRACTICE: ALL OBJECTS ON EXHIBIT HAVE WELL-WRITTEN DIDACTIC LABELS

• Labels are short and succinct
• They align to the Big Idea of the exhibition
• Written for a wide variety of audiences
• Have well-researched information
• Includes close looking statements or questions to engage visitors

Courtesy of the Utah Museum of Fine Arts
SCALING DOWN: Education

- Choose 3 objects to write didactic labels
- Put drafts on exhibit and ask visitors their opinion
NEXT STEPS: Education

- Make a plan to write one didactic label a month
- Go to other museums to get inspiration
COLLECTIONS

Jennifer Ortiz, Utah Division of Arts & Museums, Office of Museum Services
BEST PRACTICE: HAVE AN EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

- Includes preparedness and response plans for all relevant emergencies and threats
- Addresses the needs of staff, visitors, structures, and collections
- Specifies how to protect, evacuate, and recover collections in the event of a disaster
- Includes evacuation routes and assembly areas for people
- Assigns individual responsibilities for implementation during emergencies
- Lists contact information for relevant emergency and recovery services
- Includes floorplans
- Bears date of last revision
SCALING DOWN: Collections

• Start with a Pocket Response Plan (PReP)

• Participate in free local events hosted through your Office of Emergency Management (OEM) or other similar organization

• Purchase ready-made supply kits like REACT PAKs
NEXT STEP: Collections

- Hold annual all staff, all day training
- Participate in local cooperative disaster networks
MARKETING

David Wicai, Land Cruiser Heritage Museum
BEST PRACTICE: DON’T GUESS. USE DATA TO DETERMINE WHERE MARKETING $ ARE SPENT

- Use a variety of accessible data resources
- Don’t make a decision without considering the data
- Ask the questions that matter the most
- Don’t collect data just to collect data
- It is okay to collect data and put it on the shelf
SCALING DOWN: Marketing

• Don’t use everything available
• Make sense of basic data sets
• Practical is better than perfect
• Use the most cost effective channels that give you data back
NEXT STEPS: Marketing

- Take the time to learn new systems
- Use the help available to make sense of all the data
- Reach out to other organizations that may already have data on what you are looking for
NOW IT’S YOUR TURN!
ROUND TABLE CONVERSATIONS

1. BREAK OUT INTO THE ROUNDTABLE GROUPS
2. 15-20 MINUTES AT EACH TABLE
3. JENNIFER WILL ANNOUNCE TIME FOR SWAPPING TABLES
QUESTIONS, DISCUSSION, WRAP-UP

JENNIFER ORTIZ
Museum Services Manager | Utah Division of Arts & Museums | jenniferortiz@utah.gov

DAVID WICAI
Executive Director | Land Cruiser Heritage Museum | davidwicai@gmail.com

MEGAN VAN FRANK
Director | Center for Community Heritage | Utah Humanities | vanfrank@utahhumanities.org

VIRGINIA CATHERALL
Curator of Education | Utah Museum of Fine Arts | virginia.catherall@umfa.utah.edu