



Museum Competencies and the Alberta Museums Association Grants Program

Overview of Competencies

The Alberta Museums Association's Leadership Working Group defined competencies to include "skills, knowledge, self-concept, traits and motives." Competencies define positions at the global level rather than the specific job tasks and responsibilities typically found in job descriptions. Competency documents are meant to help identify current skills as well as aid in working towards gaining new skills.

The following document was created specifically for use in the AMA Grants Program and is an abridged and edited version of the -AMA's "Competencies for Museum Leadership" document. The original document was created by Maureen Matthew in September 2007 and includes specific competencies, possible indicators, and possible sources of evidence, and explicitly links those competencies to focussed aspects of leadership positions in museums. The full document and background information can be found on our website at: <http://www.museums.ab.ca>

How to Use Competencies in Your Grant Application:

Identify competencies that your professional development opportunity supports, including sections and page numbers. These competencies should reflect skills that you hope to acquire or further develop through this opportunity that will be beneficial to your position within the museum and to the museum itself. These competencies are meant to be versatile and can often be applied to a variety of museum positions.

For Example:

General Leadership Competency #1 p. 2 –Articulates museum's vision, mission, values and ethics through programs, services and policies.

- Attending the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) Conference will allow me to participate in sessions regarding Strategic Planning, which will provide me with the tools necessary to reevaluate our vision, mission, and values, and ensure that they are in line with CMA ethics.

Self-management Competencies

To be successful as a leader, a variety of self-management competencies are necessary. Self-management refers to the methods, skills, and strategies by which individuals can effectively direct their own activities toward the achievement of objectives. Such competencies include:

Adaptability

Ability to work in ambiguous or changing situations, and with diverse individuals or groups.

Problem Solving

Identifying the underlying issues inherent in problems and proposing positive solutions.

Initiative

Persevering and proactively dealing with situations and issues; seizing opportunities that arise.

Team Work

Working collaboratively with others to achieve museum goals.

Interpersonal Communication

Listening to others, understanding complex documents and reports, and communicating needs and directions clearly.

Process Management

Ability to analyze systems and structures and propose alternatives to improve processes.

Change Management

Adapting and altering plans and/or processes to operate effectively in a potentially volatile operating environment.

Organizational Awareness

Understanding and using the workings, structures, climate, and culture of the museum to achieve results.

General Leadership Competencies

The General Leadership Competencies have similar components to those of the Executive Director but can be applied to a number of positions within a museum. Depending on the position in question, the competency will differ slightly. For example, the Executive Director competency would be to **establish** policies, whereas the General competency would be to **apply** those same policies.

1. Articulates museum's vision, mission, values, and ethics through programs, services, and policies.
2. Explores initiatives that impact the museum's future viability and capacity.
3. Determines or adjusts department / program, strategies, directions, priorities, structures, and processes to the changing needs of the museum.
4. Anticipates issues and challenges to effectively position the department / program so that critical long-term issues are addressed.
5. Ensures that programs are monitored to track progress and results, resources are optimally utilized, and revisions are made as needed.
6. Identifies problems that impact on department / program's operation as well as optimal solutions that reflect the museum's mission, values, and ethics.
7. Uses communication strategies to effectively engage and inform stakeholders of department / program's directions.
8. Provides direction, monitoring and feedback on the financial health of the department / program.
9. Builds sustainability for the department/program by ensuring staff, volunteer, and stakeholder awareness of the financial impact of long-term plans.

10. Uses policies to efficiently use financial resources available to the department/program.
11. Applies policies so that the human resources of the department / program are effectively used.
12. Develops and implements a staffing plan for the department / program to ensure that current and future staffing needs for museum directions are achieved.
13. Creates and maintains a healthy workplace.
14. Fosters a culture of continuous learning that focuses on the current and future needs of the museum.
15. Coaches department / program staff by providing direction, guidance, and support to implement programs and services in support of the museum's mission and values.
16. Manages contracts with fee for service consultants.

Museum-Specific Leadership Competencies

Although these are considered discipline specific competencies, they can be applied to other positions if appropriate. Also, oftentimes museum employees perform many duties within their institution and as such competencies throughout this document may be relevant to the applicant.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Executive Director is the senior staff position in the museum and reports directly to the governing authority of the museum. The position may have other titles including:

- **Chief Executive Officer**
- **General Manager**

There is debate concerning the experience and / or training in museum work required by an Executive Director. While familiarity with the museum field, its systems, funding, and contacts is important, the primary focus of the senior staff person in any non-profit organization is to create systems and processes that ensure the organization is sustainable, and to build the organization's future. Consequently, the competencies presented for the Executive Director focus on leading the museum rather than specific content related to museum disciplines.

1. Determines or adjusts long-term strategies, directions, priorities, structures, and processes to the changing needs of the museum's operating environment.
2. Uses political, cultural, and social contexts to position the museum, or to address long-term issues, critical to the museum's success.
3. Resolves complex problems that are difficult to define, often contradictory, and are acting as barriers to achieving the museum's strategic direction.
4. Uses communications strategies to effectively engage, advocate, and inform the public and other stakeholders, including staff and volunteers, of museum directions.
5. Provides direction, monitoring, and feedback on the financial health of the museum.
6. Builds sustainability for the museum by ensuring public and stakeholder awareness of the financial impact of long-term plans.
7. Creates policies for efficient use of the museum's financial resources.

8. Establishes a policy framework for the effective use of human resources (staff and volunteers) in the operation of the museum.
9. Fosters a culture of continuous learning which focuses on both current and future needs of the museum.
10. Develops the acquisition plan to fulfill the museum's strategic direction.
11. Oversees development and implementation of staffing plan to ensure that current and future staffing needs for museum directions are met.
12. Coaches by providing direction, guidance, and support to implement programs and services that support the museum's vision, mission, and values.
13. Provides support, guidance, and direction to the museum's governing authority (such as a Board of Directors).
14. Develops policies for delivering programs to various public target audiences, including building collaborative relationships with community sectors.
15. Acts as the lead museum resource in the following areas: liaison with the K-12 education system; relevant legislation and implementation on Occupational Health and Safety legislation; relevant legislation regarding cultural property; relevant legislation and strategies on risk management particularly as it relates to the museum's collection; and, customer services initiatives.

CURATOR

A Curator working in a leadership position (Chief Curator, Manager of Curatorial Services, Curator of Collections, etc.) will typically deal with developing and implementing long-range plans for the research and exhibition of the museum's collections.

1. Develops the collections plan to fulfill the museum's strategic direction.
2. Develops policies for collections research that reflect the museum's strategic directions.
3. Develops scope and objectives of studies and research needed to enhance knowledge and use of the collection.
4. Acts as the lead museum resource on relevant legislation and strategies on risk management, particularly as it relates to the museum's collection.
5. Effective program management skills to achieve department / program goals.

COLLECTIONS MANAGER

A Collections Manager working in a leadership position (Manager of Collections, Registrar, etc.) develops and oversees the collections documentation program of the museum.

1. Develops policies for the documentation, management, and access to the museum's collection.
 2. Acts as the lead museum resource on relevant legislation regarding cultural property.
 3. Develops a comprehensive and systematic collections management plan.
 4. Develops a long-term plan to sustain the collection's information management system.
 5. Effective program management skills to achieve department / program goals.
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MUSEUM EDUCATION MANAGER

A Museum Education Manager working in a leadership position (such as Education Director, Curator of Education, Education Manager etc.), develops and oversees the programs, events, and activities that educate students in the K-12 system.

1. Develops policies for delivering education programs, including building collaborative relationships with K-12 stakeholders.
2. Acts as the lead museum resource and liaison with the K-12 education system.
3. Develops a comprehensive and systematic education plan.
4. Effective program management skills to achieve department / program goals.

CONSERVATOR

A Conservator working in a leadership position develops and oversees programs that focus on the long-term care of museum's collections.

1. Develops policies for the long-term care of the collection.
2. Acts as the lead museum resource on relevant legislation, including the implementation of Occupational Health and Safety legislation.
3. Develops a comprehensive Care of Collections Plan.
4. Effective program management skills to achieve department / program goals.

INTERPRETER

An Interpreter working in a leadership position will develop and oversee programs that focus on programs and services for the public.

1. Develops policies for delivering programs to various public target audiences, including building collaborative relationships with community sectors.
2. Acts as lead museum resource for customer service initiatives.
3. Develops a comprehensive and systematic public interpretation plan.
4. Effective program management skills to achieve department / program goals.