

# Request for Annual Conference Program Proposals

March 14-16, 2009  
Omni Hotel, Richmond

## **Topic Proposal Only Deadline July 9; Full Proposal Deadline August 1**

We offer two different options for proposals. As always, if you have a session idea, and know people you could present at that session, complete the full proposal form and return it to VAM by August 1<sup>st</sup>. If, on the other hand, you have a great idea for a session, but don't know who could speak or lead the session, simply fill out the first part of the form and return it to VAM by July 9<sup>th</sup>. All topics submitted by **July 9<sup>th</sup>** will be distributed to our Program Committee, our Council and our members. Anyone who is interested in participating for a given topic will contact the person who submitted the session, who will then complete the session and submit it by **August 1<sup>st</sup>**.

## **Museums Driving Change**

In these lean times, museums may think they need to retreat, regroup, and recover. Instead, museums should look outward, push forward, and make a real difference in their communities and in the lives and minds of their audiences. Museums have the ability to take the lead in the economic revitalization of their communities and redefine themselves in the process. This year's conference will help inspire museums to do just that—and will offer lots of advice and guidance on how to move forward.

We would like to invite program proposals on the following topics:

- The Role of Museums in Communities
- New Ways for Museums to Lead
- Museum as Example
- Conservation of Resources (greening the museum)
- Capitalizing on Local Audiences
- Creative Solutions to Common Problems
- The Future of Museum Leadership

### CONFERENCE SPEAKER POLICIES

**Conference registration is required.** VAM does not provide stipends or other travel reimbursements for conference speakers. Speakers are responsible for all of their own costs related to the conference, including conference registration fees. Speakers within the museum field will be offered a discounted registration rate for the conference. If a speaker finds s/he cannot attend the conference, they need to let VAM know no later than January 1, 2010, so that VAM can find a substitute. Speakers who are not in the museum field *may* be granted an exemption from the registration requirement.

Vendors who propose a session are required to include at least one museum-based speaker in their proposal. Conference sessions may **not** be used as an advertising tool for a specific company or service.

## DEVELOPING A PROPOSAL

Ideas for workshops and sessions can come from any number of sources. An institution's success with a project is often a starting point. Think of processes used to make a project work or nuts-and-bolts information that would help someone else to start something similar. **Don't discount less successful projects as potential subject matter.** Sharing 'lessons learned' and 'what went wrong' can help your colleagues avoid similar pitfalls.

When considering presenters, keep in mind the diversity of museums represented by VAM's members. For sessions with broad topics, **panels should contain representatives from different sizes and/or types of museums** and single speakers should gear their presentations to a wide audience with varied resources. There is nothing wrong with narrowing down a topic for a specific group or skill level, but this should be clearly stated in the program title and description.

A session **should not be simply a 'show and tell.'** but should demonstrate advice and methodology that others can implement.

### SESSION LAYOUTS

**90 minute session.** Should have two to three presenters and a moderator, or a single presenter. The format of the session can be any of the choices listed. A 15-20 minute question/answer period should end the session.

**Workshops.** An in-depth 2 ½ to 3 hour session that should include a hands-on component or other small group activity and at least 20 minutes for questions.

## FORMATS

Although a panel-type presentation is the traditional conference format, recently many of our participants have indicated a growing interest in **NON** panel sessions that provide more opportunity for open discussion and experiential learning. **Priority will be given this year to sessions that are not panel talks.** Here are some non-panel options:

**Hands-on.** A short presentation is followed by dividing the audience into small groups and providing participants with a problem to solve or a case study to discuss.

**Point/Counterpoint.** In this format, two presenters speak alternately, provided different information on the same topic. It is not necessary that the two present opposing views, although this format works well for that, just different information. Generally this format works best with presenters who know each other, or are willing to invest some time rehearsing the session. In cases where presenters actually do hold opposing views, an informed, trained moderator should be included.

**Facilitated Discussion.** This format includes a presentation of information to introduce the topic, and a facilitator to move the discussion along. The ideal facilitator would have both expertise on the topic and skill at managing a discussion.

**Panel. (Limited to four people including the chair). If possible, resist the urge to rely on a panel-dominated presentation.** There are definitely situations for which panels are the most effective approach. In that case, ensure that the panelists are able to keep to time, and leave plenty of time for participants' questions.

*For more information, contact VAM:  
(phone) 804/788-5823; (fax) 804/788-5826  
jweiskotten@vamuseums.org*