

# Connecting the Dots: Building Public Value for Children's Museums

Association of Children's Museums

Leadership Call

March 29, 2011



VERGERONT  
MUSEUM  
PLANNING

# Goals for Today's Call

- Clarify what public value is and how it benefits museums
- Walk through steps in building public value
- Practice a shared way to describe public value
- Illustrate with examples
- Questions and open discussion

# Public Value by Many Names...

- ...Relevance, external value, community impact
- How can we better serve the public in deeper, lasting ways that also serve our mission?
- How will our community will be different in positive, recognized ways because our museum exists?

# Not Just Business as Usual...

## Public value relies on:

- Going beyond taking for granted that a museum is valuable—and that others know it
- Being more outwardly focused
- Deciding what museum role best serves the community
- Aligning museum mission and operational capacity with community priorities
- Demonstrating changes in social conditions

# Connecting the Dots

Deliberately connecting:

- Community challenges
- Museum's strategic interests
- Public good
- Framed goals
- Platforms for action
- Outcomes
- Measurement

# Community Challenges

- What critical issues face your community?
- A change in perspective:
  - From assuming the museum knows what the community needs, or should need
  - To understanding community pressures
- Sources: existing studies, needs assessment, census data, Kids Count
- From the field...

# A Museum's Strategic Interests

- Which aspects of the museum's strategic interests are most relevant to issues facing the community?
- A museum's strategic interests relate to:
  - its mission
  - the audience
  - what the museum does reliably well
  - what other local players contribute—or don't
  - where the museum's existing relationships are strong

# A Museum's Strategic Interests

- Possible areas of positive change:
  - Increase civic engagement around children
  - Improve children's quality of life
  - Increase parental involvement in children's learning
  - Improve workforce capacity
  - Mitigate environmental issues
- Identify where the museum can build strong strategic connections between its priorities and those of the community
- From the field...



# Public Good

- What does the museum intend to accomplish and for whom?
- Identify a community impact that:
  - Aligns with community priorities and museum interests
  - Goes beyond internal priorities
  - Considers personal, social, and economic benefits
  - Extends beyond a museum visit for long-term impact

# Public Good

- Review related studies and effective practices that give direction for framing goals and provide confidence that the effort is likely to be successful
- On-going documentation of the museum's impact
- From the field...

# Framed Goals

- What does the museum need to accomplish to produce those results?
- Frame goals that are:
  - Long-term
  - Well-defined
  - Directed to specific group(s)
  - Actionable
  - Connected with and build on one another
  - Targeting desired changes
- From the field...

# Platforms for Action

- What strategies will help accomplish the goals?
- Strategies:
  - Varied (community engagement, partnerships and networks, technologies, advocacy, research and dissemination; facilitated experiences)
  - Build on museum competencies
  - Linked to goals

# Platforms for Action

- What resources and activities will support the strategies and help accomplish the goals?
- Resources should:
  - Align with strategies and goals
  - Be within the museum's operational capacity
- Examples:
  - Ability to convene partners
  - Expertise, internal or through partnerships
  - Internal processes and practices
  - Programs: access, professional development
  - Funding
- From the field...

# Outcomes

- What does the change look like and for whom?

# Metrics

- How will you know the extent to which your museum is having an impact?

# A Case Study

Follow the steps in building public value  
as a children's museum serves its  
community while serving its mission



# Case Study: Community Challenges

- Limited play opportunities, or play deprivation, for children in low-income city neighborhoods where high density housing and small yards along with high crime makes children's outdoor play limited and unsafe

# Case Study: Museum's Strategic Interests

- Mission: Engage children, connect families, and build community through the joy of play and the wonder of learning.
- Target audience: Children 8 years and under, their parents, caregivers, and teachers
- Strategic interest:
  - The value of play and its benefits to a child's well-being and development: social, cognitive, emotional, and physical.
  - Museum serves children and their parents

# Case Study: Public Good

- Social/community value
  - Stronger community
  - Safer neighborhoods
  - Healthier children
- Area of change: Regular, positive, and safe outdoor play experiences for the 4,000 children, 3 through 8 years in 3 adjacent city neighborhoods: Elliot, Powderhorn, and Whittier

# Case Study: Framed Goals

- Increase parents' awareness of the value of play for their child's development - physical, social, emotional, and cognitive
- Provide families in targeted neighborhoods with choices of safe outdoor play areas within 4 blocks of where they live
- Expand neighborhood places for outdoor play: playgrounds, KaBOOM!, sidewalk playgrounds
- Build a cross-sector network of partners to advocate for increased play opportunities for children in their neighborhoods

# Case Study: Platforms for Action

- Community engagement: Community conversations around play
- Partners: Mayor's office, Park & Rec, Landscape Architecture School, library, Boys and Girls Club
- Training: Train neighborhood parents as playworkers
- Museum events: Intergenerational *Play Parties*, Co-host Ultimate Block Party
- Research: Map existing and potential play areas in each neighborhood; collect parent play memories

# A Case for Public Value

- Achieve impact for the community
- Be recognized as benefiting the community
- Provide coherence across complex tasks
- Get everyone on the same page
- Support team approach
- Use resources more efficiently

# Starting Where You Are

- Use the opportunity to articulate your museum's community impact as you:
  - Develop a case for support for a new museum or a capital campaign
  - Conduct a strategic planning process
  - Build on an area with significant potential for impact where you are already strong
  - Formulate your next initiative, i.e. health, using a community centered-museum-framed approach
  - Do a MAP self-study or Good To Grow self-study

# Resources

- *Measuring Public Value*. V.S. Yocco, J. Heimlich, E. Meyer. And P.Edwards. Visitor Studies, 2009, 12(2), 152-163.
- *Being Purposeful: Planning for, Initiating, and Documenting Public Value*. L. Dierking. ASTC Dimensions. January-February 2010.
- *Raising the Bar: Aiming for Public Value*. M.E. Munley. Journal of Museum Education, Vol. 35, No. 1. Spring 2010. Pp. 21-32.



# Resources

- *Museums, the Public, and Public Value*. C. A. Scott. Journal of Museum Education, Vol. 35, No. 1. Spring 2010. Pp. 33-42.
- *Intentionally Fostering and Documenting Public Value*. Lynn Dierking. Journal of Museum Education, Vol. 35, No. 1. Spring 2010. Pp. 9-19.
- *Advocating the Value of Museums*. C. A. Scott. Presented at INTERCOM/ICOM, Vienna 20th August 2007. [www.intercom.museum/documents/documents/CarolScott.pdf](http://www.intercom.museum/documents/documents/CarolScott.pdf).

# Resources

- *Leading Where it Matters: Measuring Success in the Art Museums of Minneapolis.* M.L. Anderson, CEO Indianapolis Museum of Art. April 1, 2008.
- *Outcomes Framework for Museums, Libraries and Archives.* [www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising\\_standards/improvement/~media/Files/pdf/2008/outcomes\\_framework\\_v2.ashx](http://www.mla.gov.uk/what/raising_standards/improvement/~media/Files/pdf/2008/outcomes_framework_v2.ashx).

Also attend: **From Nice to Necessary.** May 19 at 10:45. InterActivity, Houston

# Thank you!

- Questions?
- Discussion

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