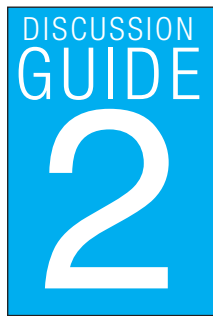




MANY Discussion Guides for
Museum Staffs, Directors and Boards of Trustees



Around the Water Cooler: How Can Organizations Spur Professional Development and Training Opportunities for their Staffs?

Dear Readers:

We hope that reading “Who’s Next?” will prompt discussion in your museum. While “Who’s Next?” is primarily about retiring baby boomers making way for GenXers and Millennials, many other issues bubbled to the surface in researching the paper.

One issue that came up over and over during the research for “Who’s Next?” is the question of mid-career training in particular and professional development in general. In brief, the complaints were many and the opportunities were few. Sensitivity to the training needs of staff, making time for training, and funding training are all issues to one degree or another for most organizations.

The following questions are aimed at helping organizations determine what, if any, mid-career training might help their staffs and more importantly, why.



HOLDING A CONVERSATION FOR A STAFF OF AN INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZATION

Moderator: Executive director, department head, team leader or outside facilitator.

Format: Staff meeting, retreat or workshop. (If this discussion is part of a larger meeting, we recommend reserving 60 to 90 minutes for discussion.)

Read: “Who’s Next?” or another article from the white paper’s bibliography.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

- **How and to whom do staff and administrators or board members communicate their training needs?**
- **Is there a need for mid-career training or professional development within your organization?**
- **If yes, what opportunities are available? How are they utilized? Who uses them? Would you characterize those opportunities as successful?**
- **If not, how could they be enhanced?**

Give participants the opportunity to consider the following question individually:

- **Given the opportunity, what types of training might enhance your work and why? How could your organization help with that?**

If your group is large, you may want to divide into smaller groups. Make sure someone records responses. Return to the full group to report what you learned.

- **What are the implications of your discussion? How can your organization respond in the short term? For the future?**
- **What resources will be required to build a strong program of professional development?**
- **How should the field as a whole respond?**

FOR BOARDS OF TRUSTEES:

Possible moderator: Board president or any board member interested in this topic and able to facilitate an open discussion, or an outside facilitator.

Format: Board meeting, retreat or workshop.

Background Reading: "Who's Next?" or another article from the bibliography.

POSSIBLE QUESTIONS:

- **Why are professional development opportunities important?**
- **What mid-career training or professional development opportunities does your organization provide?**
- **Are those opportunities available to all staff?**
- **Rate your organization's commitment and capability for mid-career training and professional development:**
 - a. **Understanding the value of mid-career training and professional development;**
 - b. **Increasing funding for mid-career training or professional development;**
 - c. **Creating professional development opportunities;**
 - d. **Sharing lessons learned from mid-career training or professional development.**
- **What are the strengths and weaknesses of your museum's professional development program?**
- **How can you build on your strengths?**
- **Should training opportunities be different for the director than the rest of the staff?**
- **Should museums adopt an academic model and provide directors and senior staff with sabbaticals?**
- **Why is training important for a board?**
- **What training opportunities are available to trustees?**
- **How can your organization best support professional development opportunities?**
- **What resources will be required to build a strong program of professional development?**

TIPS FOR A DISCUSSION FACILITATOR/MODERATOR

The following tips were taken from *The Nonprofit Quarterly* (Winter 2002)

- 1. Introduce yourselves.** It's helpful to begin the discussion by making sure that everyone in the group has been introduced.
- 2. Provide an opening question.** As part of the introductions (even among people who know each other), use one opening question so everyone gets a chance to talk—before getting into the topic of the discussion.

Some sample opening questions are:

- What is one hope that you have for this discussion?**
- What inspires your work with this organization?**
- What is something you would like us to know about you?**
- What new or good thing has happened in your work or your organization since we last met?**

- 3. After posing a question, give people time to reflect.** Some people are ready to jump right into any discussion—on any topic. Others prefer time to think about their responses before entering a conversation. After posing a question, tell the group that you are going to pause first to give everyone a chance to think. This also gives participants a chance to collect their own thoughts on the topic, rather than just responding to the person who spoke before them.
- 4. Give a time frame for responses.** Particularly if you want to hear a variety of responses or experiences, you might choose to give each participant a time limit. This also avoids the tendency for a few people to dominate the discussion.
- 5. Provide a structure that allows participants to focus on speaking and listening.** You may want to have people go around the circle to speak in turn. This minimizes anxiety about when to speak. If you use this structure, allow everyone the option to pass. Or you may decide people should enter the conversation when they want to contribute a thought or respond to the question. Participants should discuss and agree on a preferred structure.
- 6. Take time to reflect upon your response to the questions.** Reserve time toward the end of your discussion to ask:
 - What have you learned from this discussion? or
 - What new insights do you have as a result of this discussion?
- 7. Take time to determine some implications for practice.** After you have reflected on what you have learned, you might want to ask:
 - What are some implications for your practice as a board, executive director, department head, staff member, etc.?
 - What will you do differently as a result of this conversation?

FEEDBACK

Please let us know how you used this discussion guide. You may fax or send it to us. Addresses and numbers are listed below.

NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

ORGANIZATION: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP CODE: _____

Are you a MANY member? Yes ___ No ___

Tell us how you used the discussion guide. Who used it?

Did participants read anything beforehand? If so, what?

Was the guide helpful?

What would you change?

Will you use it again? Will you recommend it to others?

Use additional pages as needed.

RETURN TO:

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