



Toolkit

Recommended Practices for Railway Museums

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HeritageRail Alliance is a member of:



*HRA Toolkit is an initiative of the HeritageRail Alliance,
and Association of Railway Museums and Tourist Railroads*

*Originally created in 1997 by HRA's predecessor
the Association of Railway Museums
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the American Alliance of Museums
and funding support from
the Institute for Museum and Library Services*



Image: Freeman Ryan Design

***Dedicated to Ken Rucker and Don Evans
Esteemed Colleagues and Friends***

Introduction

The original version of this document was developed in 1997 by a working group within the Association of Railway Museums (ARM). The final product was intended to provide a pathway to accreditation for the association's members in accordance with the American Association of Museums (AAM), now the American Alliance of Museums standards and practices.

In 2012, the Association of Railway Museums merged with the Tourist Railway Association (TRAIN), combining memberships and creating a broad-based association with greater breadth and reach in the field of historic rail preservation and operation. The new organization was known as the Association of Tourist Railroad and Railway Museums (ATTRM), and finally in 2017 HeritageRail Alliance (HRA).

Following the merger, priority was given to updating this Recommended Practices document in an effort to acknowledge and address recent challenges and approaches in the field. Recognizing that such an endeavor must remain fluid to respond to an ever-changing environment and culture, this is but the latest updated version.

We wish to acknowledge the following individuals at HRA for their service on the 2017-2018 Recommended Practices Revisions/Update Committee: Bob LaPrelle, Chair, Kyle Wyatt, Jim Schantz, Craig Sansonetti, Don Evans, and Scott Becker. Special thanks to Julie Hart, Senior Director, Museum Standards & Excellence at AAM.

Guiding Principles

The HRA Toolkit is rooted in the American Alliance of Museums' (AAM) Five Core Documents and Core Standards for Museums. In assembling each section of these Recommended Practices for Railway Museums, every effort was made to do so in accordance with the core standards contained in these documents. They are listed here to serve as a foundation for the reader of HRA Toolkit and to serve as a means of grounding the document for future interpretation and revisions. The Five Core Documents are as follows: Mission Statement, Institutional Code of Ethics, Strategic Institutional Plan, Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Response Plan, and Collections Management Policy. Successful incorporation of these documents into a museum's practices will serve as a foundation for accreditation – the very basis of the HRA Toolkit.

The accreditation review process will assess how well museums achieve their stated mission and goals, and how well they meet standards and best practices in the field.

In addition to AAM's accreditation process, another very worthy and useful program is available through the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH). Their Standards and Excellence Program for History Organization (STEPS) is an excellent resource and guide for museums seeking to increase or improve their collections stewardship and professionalism. This is especially true in cases where accreditation may not be attainable or ideal.

Developed in 2005, STEPS is tailored to museums and significant sites in the field of history and heritage. While essentially a self-assessment program, STEPS is based on performance indicators, allowing institutions to earn progress certificates that celebrate accomplishments. The program consists of six main areas, including: Mission, Vision, and Governance; Audience; Interpretation; Stewardship of Collections; Stewardship of Historic Structures and Landscapes; and Management. A workbook is available from AASLH which is divided into nine sections for an easy sequential approach to completing the program. Like many AAM initiatives, STEPS was created with funding and input from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). For additional information, visit <https://aaslh.org/programs/steps/>

A Note of Thanks

The following is the original text that provides background and acknowledgement of the authors of the original Recommended Practices from 1997, which are deserving of continued appreciation today.

These Recommended Practices for Railway Museums represent the summation of many months' worth of selfless effort on the part of numerous individuals representing ARM member institutions in both the United States and Canada. A Recommended Practices Working Group convened several times in Washington, D.C., thanks to the availability of meeting facilities there graciously provided by National Public Radio, and other meetings took place elsewhere as well.

The Working Group's membership remained fluid, and numerous helpful comments and suggestions were received from far and wide in connection with each of eight succeeding drafts that were circulated leading up to the final document. A complete listing of those who assisted in the process is therefore simply not possible here, but several persons and one association in particular deserve mention:

Jim Schantz of the Seashore Trolley Museum, for drafting much of the initial copy from which the final document evolved; the Western Region Committee of the Canadian Council for Railway Heritage, for providing the initial wording from which this document's Ethics section was adapted; Wayne Schmidt of St. Louis' Museum of Transportation, for duplicating and distributing copies of each successive working draft; Brian Norden of the

Orange Empire Railway Museum, for taking on printing and distribution to the entire ARM membership of Draft Version 5 and this final adopted version; Paul Hammond, former editor of *Locomotive & Railway Preservation* magazine, for gathering, reviewing, and incorporating as appropriate a host of sometimes contradictory suggestions into each succeeding draft, plus editing and formatting these and the final document for publication; and finally, ARM President Scott Becker, for his tireless advocacy of the process leading up to this document's adoption, and also his work in procuring the grant for its printing.

The Association of Railway Museums is deeply indebted to all who took part in this document's thoughtful production.

Preamble

Railway museums represent a diverse mix of organizations and institutions that traditionally have been driven by several primary forces:

The tremendous interest shared by numerous individuals in the main line and urban railways of North America, and the significant impacts of these railways on their lives, particularly in times past. The realization that failure to acquire many railroad artifacts in a timely manner would result in their immediate, deliberate destruction. The fact that other museums and historical societies were unable to preserve and interpret these fields in a comprehensive way. The evolution of a committed, volunteer movement which fulfilled the need to preserve the memory and history of this fundamental developmental force in North America's heritage

The railway preservation movement began almost entirely with concerted volunteer efforts and some corporate or civic attempts to preserve and secure for posterity the artifacts, documents, equipment, and structures of this railway heritage. These pioneering efforts have nurtured the public memory of railway transportation history, and institutionalized the preservation of its many physical reminders. As caretakers of history, the resulting organizations have attempted—through a variety of static and operating venues—to present their collections and materials to a diverse and broad-based audience throughout North America.

The stewardship and trust practiced by dedicated volunteers and emerging institutions during these early years have formed a foundation upon which to build, and provided a large body of knowledge. Today, these institutions wish to share this knowledge with the visiting public, with other railway heritage preservation institutions, and with the museum field.

The railway heritage preservation field is now in transition, from inward-oriented preservation organizations to outward-oriented educational and public service institutions

that recognize a responsibility to hold their collections in the public trust. Recommended Practices for Railway Museums is a document intended to help guide this transition. As the field becomes more aligned with mainstream museums, the need for professional standards and practices increases for both paid and volunteer staff. Further, with the merger of ARM and TRAIN creating today's HRA, it becomes increasingly important to acknowledge and incorporate operating practices for vintage railway equipment to ensure their continued preservation and safety.

Use of This Guide

The HeritageRail Alliance has formulated these Recommended Practices to serve as a self-help guide for institutional growth and development. As with any comprehensive document, not all parts apply to or affect all institutions. It bears mentioning that some practices contained herein may not apply to tourist railways due to the nature of their operations. Some museums, however, have an operating component – either regular or periodic operation/demonstration of historic pieces within their collection. While this document will not attempt to distinguish between the two operations, it provides overarching guidelines for the preservation and interpretation of the artifacts associated with both fields.

In deference to the original intent of Recommended Practices and its authors, the information contained herein applies primarily to railway museums, whether static or operational.

Practices for the actual operation of historic railway equipment, including rules for T&E crews, safety, and regulatory issues are not addressed by this document. Any information contained herein should not be construed as such.

Recommended Practices for Railway Museums identifies the unique characteristics of railway museums and integrates these characteristics with practices that are today standard in the broader museum field. Its goals are:

1. To serve as an educational tool for railway preservation and interpretive efforts, and to communicate the expectations commonly accepted in the field.
2. To function as a guide and to provide a framework for existing operations and organizations as they strive to achieve higher levels of professionalism.
3. To serve as a benchmark for railway museums seeking accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the Canadian Museums Association (CMA), and others. By keeping the unique concerns of the railway preservation community foremost, Recommended Practices will be a guide by which visiting accreditation committees can evaluate levels of professionalism at railway museums.

4. To define and emphasize the railway museum and preservation community's commitment to holding its collections in the public trust, ensuring the long-term care of the historic objects entrusted to its protection.
5. To demonstrate to a public audience and to the railway preservation field each institution's commitment to serving and educating the public through a variety of means, including effective interpretation techniques.
6. To help HRA member institutions increase the effectiveness of their fundraising and development efforts through demonstration—to the public and potential donors—of their commitment, not only to collections care and interpretation but also to professional management practices and community involvement.

Organized railway preservation began as a series of grass-roots efforts by individuals, communities, and corporate leaders. Professionalism levels therefore must evolve, increasing as each institution matures and develops additional resources.

Limited resources may necessarily preclude or delay adoption of some of the initiatives recommended in this document. Nevertheless, the Alliance believes that member organizations should review these Recommended Practices, and establish eventual achievement of the recommendations as an institutional goal.

The Alliance recognizes that the HRA Toolkit: *Recommended Practices for Railway Museums* is part of an evolving document, and welcomes comments and suggestions.

This updated version was adopted by unanimous vote April 25, 2019 by the Board during HRA's annual spring conference at the California State Railway Museum in Sacramento, CA.



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1. Institutional Purpose

Railway museums need a clearly stated purpose, giving them a reason to exist and providing a means from which to set their direction.

- 1.1 Museums are not-for-profit institutions that collect and preserve artifacts and related documents in the public interest:
 - a. Holding collections in public trust, museums strive to conserve these items in the most responsible manner possible, and to display, demonstrate, and interpret them in ways that educate and enlighten people
 - b. In order to convey the idea that railroads, interurban and street railways, and similar operations existed to provide a system of transportation, railway museums also often preserve and interpret skills, crafts, and processes, not just objects. They may choose to operate parts of their collections for the visitor by providing experiences such as rides aboard authentic rail vehicles
- 1.2 Each institution must clearly establish its purposes through adoption of a Mission Statement that articulates the museum's broad institutional goals and objectives as they relate to the acquisition, preservation, care, and use of items collected in the public interest. Items to be addressed would typically include:
 - a. What kinds of things a museum will collect, limited in terms of types of artifacts and documents (e.g., rail equipment, ephemera, or photographs), technologies, or other subgroupings (e.g., interurban electric or main/short line railroading), geographical areas, and time periods
 - b. How these tangible items will be used for the public good, in terms of such things as displays, demonstrations, programming, and scholarly access
 - c. Who benefits as a result of its [the museum's] efforts
- 1.3 In order to assure continued validity of institutional goals and their relevance to public involvement and interest, railway museums should conduct periodic or ongoing reassessment
- 1.4 There are several excellent resources available for railroad museums – those that are just getting started, as well as established institutions: 1) AAM's Continuum of Excellence which includes the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) and Collections Assessment Program (CAP) – both important tools when achieving accreditation. 2) AASLH's STEPS Program. 3) U.S. Department of Interior's Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties.

The above resources address several of the topics in this Toolkit: Institutional Purpose, Governance, Programming, and Collections Stewardship.

2. Governance

The governing authority protects and enhances the museum's collections and programs and monitors its physical, human, and financial resources. It ensures that all these instruments and resources support the museum's mission. A museum's mission statement should be at the core of its governance, and should be reviewed from time to time to keep the organization on track.

2.1 Museum governance must be in conformance with museum community and governmental statutes & policies, ethical standards, and regulations. Governing authority members must:

- a. Be aware of their fiduciary, legal, and ethical responsibilities as trustees of collections held in the public trust
- b. Ensure that all those who work for or on behalf of a museum understand and support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- c. Understand and fulfil their trusteeship duties, acting corporately rather than as individuals
- d. Ensure that a formal mechanism (e.g., a code of conduct) exists to disseminate standards and expectations regarding working relationships among trustees, employees, and volunteers, based on equity and mutual respect
- e. Be aware of applicable provisions of non-profit law, tax and accounting regulations, and related legal and fiscal concerns including institutional and individual liability and exposure

2.2 As most railway museums depend on a high level of volunteer staffing and management, and have traditionally been financed largely by grassroots support from many small donors directly interested and involved in museum activities, museum boards often include heavy participation or even control by member/volunteer staff members. Governing authorities:

- a. Should reflect the communities served by their museums and address the needs of those communities through relevant, meaningful programming and exhibits. This is best accomplished through diverse leadership consisting of multiple disciplines to ensure programmatic, culturally inclusive, and economic success.
- b. Must understand that the demands and concerns posed by holding differing and potentially conflicting roles within an organization (e.g., governing authority member and department head) pose added challenges for those affected to act responsibly and ethically
- c. Must consider that management involvement by dedicated staffers can be both a strength, in terms of commitment to a museum, as well as a possible source of insular or myopic thinking, factors which must be weighed carefully
- d. Should ensure that new candidates are encouraged in the processes by which individuals are selected or nominated for the governing authority. Consideration should be given to nominating candidates based on a diversity of qualifications

such as objectivity, business and/or management background, leadership abilities, and other appropriate abilities or skills. Levels of popularity with other members, degree of organizational participation, or accumulated volunteer service hours should not be the primary criteria in such processes

- e. Are encouraged to formulate policies and plans for broadening their organization's community representation and participation, either in terms of adding members of the community-at-large to the board itself, or by involving such community representatives in advisory or review capacities
- f. Are encouraged to think broadly and make decisions for the good of the institution, not just to advance ideas, improvements, or programs that fall within the areas of their greatest personal interest

3. Institutional Code of Ethics

Museums and their holdings exist for the benefit of society and are held in the public trust. It is important that a museum's leadership act as a corporate body and not individually to uphold that trust and maintain a sanctuary for its holdings.

In accordance with AAM's Code of Ethics for Museums adopted in 1993 and amended in 2000, this document sets forth the following guidelines.

3.1 Museums require corporate structure and a governing body. The governing authority ensures that:

- All those who work for or on behalf of a museum understand and support its mission and public trust responsibilities.
- Its members understand and fulfil their trusteeship and act corporately, not as individuals.
- The museum's collections and programs and its physical, human and financial resources are protected, maintained and developed in support of the museum's mission.
- It is responsive to and represents the interests of society.
- It maintains the relationship with staff in which shared roles are recognized and separate responsibilities respected.
- Working relationships among trustees, employees and volunteers are based on equity and mutual respect.
- Professional standards and practices inform and guide museum operations.
- Policies are articulated and prudent oversight is practiced.
- Governance promotes the public good rather than individual financial gain.

3.2 Museum collections are cultural assets held in the public trust. Stewardship of Collections ensures that:

- Collections in its custody support its mission and public trust responsibilities.

- Collections in its custody are lawfully held, protected, secure, unencumbered, cared for and preserved.
- Collections in its custody are accounted for and documented.
- Access to the collections and related information is permitted and regulated
- Acquisition, disposal, and loan activities are conducted in a manner that respects the protection and preservation of natural and cultural resources and discourages illicit trade in such materials.
- Acquisition, disposal, and loan activities conform to its mission and public trust responsibilities
- Disposal of collections through sale, trade or research activities is solely for the advancement of the museum's mission. Proceeds from the sale of non-living collections are to be used consistent with the established standards of the museum's discipline, but in no event shall they be used for anything other than acquisition or direct care of collections.
- The unique and special nature of human remains and funerary and sacred objects is recognized as the basis of all decisions concerning such collections.
- Collections-related activities promote the public good rather than individual financial gain.
- Competing claims of ownership that may be asserted in connection with objects in its custody should be handled openly, seriously, responsively and with respect for the dignity of all parties involved.

3.3 Programs further a museum's mission and are responsive to the concerns, interests, and needs of society. In doing so, the museum ensures that:

- Programs support its mission and public trust responsibilities
- Programs are founded on scholarship and marked by intellectual integrity
- Programs are accessible and encourage participation of the widest possible audience consistent with its mission and resources
- Programs respect pluralistic values, traditions and concerns
- Revenue-producing activities and activities that involve relationships with external entities are compatible with the museum's mission and support its public trust responsibilities
- Programs promote the public good rather than individual financial gain

For additional information and background on AAM's Code of Ethics for Museums, visit www.aam-us.org Using the AAM Code of Ethics for Museums as the starting point, all museums should create a stand-alone customized code which addresses the institution's basic ethical responsibilities as a public trust, steward of collections, and the conduct of individuals associated with the institution. The code should apply equally to board, staff, and volunteers, and include institution-specific and HRA-specific ethics issues.

4. Staff Structure and Evolution

Railway museums, historically heavily dependent on volunteer labor, should consider how they might enhance or even alter the makeup and organization of their staffs in order to better direct the pursuit of institutional goals and professionalism.

4.1 Many railway museums are primarily and heavily dependent on volunteer labor at all levels in their organizations. Full and part-time volunteers often fill the required staff positions and learn through experience and exposure to the field. The cultural transition from an enthusiast orientation to one embodying accepted museum field of public service and education evolves through effective management and oversight, enfranchising and motivating both paid and volunteer staff members. Characteristic aspects of railway museums affect the path to professionalism, and the following are to be considered:

- a. The primacy of safety and compliance with regulatory requirements means expertise in railway operations and related issues may be equally as important as training or experience in educational programming and museum curation. Nevertheless, railway museums are expected to provide opportunities for paid and volunteer staff to participate in professional museum development seminars and workshops in order to develop and improve their competency with such programs and practices.
- b. While financial constraints of railway museums have often imposed limitations on professional training, institutions should establish staff development and improvement goals, and look for innovative ways of encouraging professional development, networking, and collegial exchanges.
- c. Some institutions will evolve in directions requiring the engagement of compensated staff to either accomplish institutional missions or manage organizational growth. Such museums should anticipate the impacts of such changes, and develop organizational structures appropriate for the integration of volunteer and paid staff.

4.2 Personnel practices established by the governing authority shall be used to supervise both volunteer and paid staff members. The following are to be considered:

- a. Railway museum staff members, whether paid or volunteer, are often active members of the institution or interested parties who are very dedicated. Wherever reasonably possible, sensitive management techniques should be employed to allow development by such workers of a sense of ownership in their efforts, so long as it is to the organization's benefit.
- b. In similar fashion, financial constraints have often allowed paid employment only at below-market rates. In order to assure a future for such positions, and to retain talented and qualified individuals, museums desiring to fill such positions should also work to identify or develop adequate financial resources to support them at appropriate rates.

- c. Funding of staff participation in conferences, seminars and workshops is recommended, as it can reinforce a museum's commitment to developing and improving staff, procedures, and programs, among other benefits.

4.3 Railway museum staff typically includes positions in several major categories, with an executive who is responsible to the governing body for overall staff supervision. The number and variety of job types in a museum depends on its size, needs, and resources. Combining and/or dividing positions to suit specialized requirements is encouraged.

- a. The institution must establish an organizational structure that meets its major functional needs. Examples of functional areas might include:
 - Museum programs management and development
 - Collections management and exhibits development
 - Business management and resource development (fundraising)
 - Railway operations and visitor interaction
 - Facilities maintenance and development
- b. Museum programs, collections management, and exhibits development require staff who have knowledge of the history, philosophy, and ethics of museums; knowledge of the museum's mission; an understanding of the physical and historical nature of objects; good background in various types of history; an understanding of learning development patterns and human interaction skills; and an understanding of other areas of museum expertise with which the individual staff member comes in contact in the regular course of work
- c. Business management, resource development, facilities maintenance and development, and railway operations and visitor interaction require staff who have knowledge of the museum's mission; an understanding of the physical and historical nature of railways; an understanding of appropriate safety practices and procedures; and an understanding of other areas of museum expertise with which the individual staff member comes in contact in the regular course of work.
- d. Programs to encourage younger people to get involved – to carry the movement forward – but sensitive to compliance with local laws protecting youth – putting policies in place to prevent inappropriate activities.
Criminal background check for all volunteers.

3.4 It is essential that railway museums create and enforce policies that are consistent with Federal, State, and local laws that prevent discrimination and harassment of any kind. Further, there should be policies in place to facilitate the reporting of same and methods by which issues are rectified. The diversity of railway museum audiences and staffs is encouraged and recognized as an essential strength of the museum community. Discrimination on any basis should not be tolerated.

5. Programs and Support Activities

Museums recognize their role as interpreters of history and social change through the display, demonstration, and interpretation of collections.

5.1 Interpretive goals must be developed for each museum. Existing or planned collections and resources should be considered in determining these goals, which can be broadly or narrowly focused, and need not be restricted to themes suggestive only of chronological history or to simple statement of fact. These goals might include:

- a. Demonstrating the impacts of railroads and rail transit on social, political, technological, and economic history
- b. Relating how the availability of inexpensive rail passenger and freight transportation influenced patterns of agriculture and natural resource development, urban growth, suburban living, and business expansion
- c. Conveying how innovations in transportation have produced profound and lasting changes to our society
- d. Demonstrating fundamental engineering concepts such as rolling resistance, inertia, strength of materials, and deflection
- e. Demonstrating fundamental chemistry concepts such as power generation, fuel transformation, and conversion of chemical energy to mechanical energy

5.2 Successful interpretation results from integration of exhibits, demonstrations, and trained interpreters, resulting in vivid and meaningful experiences for each visitor that:

- a. Provide the historical context not offered solely by exhibits, demonstrations, or explanations – the how, when, where, and why
- b. Go beyond simple factual information and technological detail to explain how the exhibited artifacts changed people's lives
- c. Help people to challenge "common wisdom" or other widely held views that may be based solely on inaccurate history or lack of competing, scholarly viewpoints
- d. Are best measured, in terms of success, by the reactions and interest shown by everyday visitors, not just by particular interest groups or enthusiasts

5.3 The successful conveyance of information to visitors relies on attention by railway museums to several basic activities, including:

- a. Differing types of exhibits located throughout the museum. Each must be accompanied by interpretive labelling. Explanatory brochures or audio-visual programs, mobile electronic media, Internet and digital media should be used to supplement self-guided tours. Highly visible, simple directional signage should be posted to aid visitors. Tours led or directed by interpreters are strongly encouraged to help supplement these. Examples include:
 - Permanent and temporary exhibits in indoor exhibit space
 - Outdoor exhibits involving artifacts, buildings, and railway infrastructure

- Displayed vehicles and other artifacts in carhouses/train sheds. Consider especially providing viewing facilities (such as raised platforms) or supervised access, as appropriate, to rail vehicle interiors, not just exteriors
 - Exhibits (perhaps including viewing of actual work-in-progress) of ongoing and appropriate conservation/restoration, tools, and documentation techniques
 - Exhibits inside cars used for interpretation
 - Historic buildings already on-site, or ones relocated to the site that help by recreating proper ambiance and context, and/or can be utilized as appropriate facilities in which to demonstrate various railroad activities and functions
- b. Educational programming, which should seek to reach out and involve members of your community and might include:
- Classroom orientations, school field trips, and use of prepared curriculum/study guides by teachers that are based on local and state standards for appropriate grades
 - Printed publications, videos, and other media materials about the museum, its collections, and associated history
 - Internships at high school and university levels that offer opportunities for exposure to the museum field as well as historic preservation and the rail industry. Whether paid or unpaid internships, they should meet the curriculum needs of the educational institution
 - Formal classroom courses at the primary, secondary, or college level, perhaps in conjunction with local schools/universities
 - Presentations by scholars, staff, or other interested persons
 - Collecting oral histories from railroad employees, past and present, as well as community residents and related persons
 - Other innovative programming (e.g., summer camps, continuing education, and cooperative programs with other institutions or service organizations)
 - Youth programs should take into consideration the safety and security of their participants, particularly those under the age of 18. A minimum age should be established for participating in youth programs. Also, staff and volunteers working with special needs participants will require specific training.
- c. Demonstrating concern for the well-being of visitors physically, intellectually, and emotionally, by:
- Keeping public safety, security, and comfort in mind at all times, especially as it relates to museum facilities, demonstration activities, and programs
 - Showing respect for a diversity of opinions and perceptions
 - Ensuring that a lack of knowledge or background in various subjects does not unduly impede enjoyment or learning processes

- Periodically surveying visitor reactions to interpretive programs, operations, and exhibits, in order to improve their effectiveness for and increase interest among the general public

5.4 Re-creation of an authentic railway experience is one of the most powerful teaching tools available to railway museums. It helps in preserving and promulgating crafts, skills, and entire historic railroading environments

- a. The unique atmosphere of railroading and rail transit is something railway museums often choose to conserve, preserve, or re-create—almost as if it were another exhibit. If a museum chooses to interpret a particular atmosphere, it should consider codifying what the desired interpretive goal is and how the following points relate to its mission:
 - Fidelity to a given time period
 - Consistency with museum collections and other interpretive goals
 - Completeness of overall atmosphere
 - Accuracy of the effort in terms of architecture, technology, and other displayed items
 - Potentially sensitive issues from an earlier time period should be presented in the proper context, with further explanation of its relevancy to interpretation of the exhibit
- b. Each museum has unique interpretive theme possibilities related to its collections, geographical location, proximity to major cities, and/or specific site, facility, or right-of-way history
- c. Actual use of historic rail rights-of-way, passenger and freight handling facilities, and railway mechanical installations for demonstration purposes can be an important means of interpreting these sites

5.5 Railway operations can provide a unique interpretive tool for capitalizing on the sights, sounds, and smells of “live” rail vehicles, operating personnel, and the entire railway operating environment

- a. Operating equipment can supplement interpretive use of vehicles in static exhibits
- b. Operations personnel can play a major role in interpretation, thus interpretive training should be considered for inclusion in formal qualifications standards
- c. Use of period-appropriate dress and uniforms is encouraged
- d. Role playing, in which interpreters assume the persona of a rail worker or passenger from a bygone era, is an effective interpretive tool
- e. The difference between a simple ride or visit and an interpretive experience must be understood by staff and communicated to visitors, either implicitly or explicitly

5.6 Sampling and measurement of customer (visitor) feedback is a necessary component of any successful museum. In order to develop high levels of attendance and community support for institutional facilities and programs, visitor input must be sought at

regular intervals. Based on the responses, museums can decide how to best target their future course while still remaining true to their organizational mission.

- a. The development of a marketing plan is encouraged, and should be based on numerous factors, and address visitor reaction to such quantifiables as:
 - Quality and interpretive value of demonstrations and/or operations
 - Relevance of museum demonstrations, exhibits, and programs to visitors' daily lives and experiences
 - Relevance of displays and exhibits to persons without specialized railroad- related knowledge
 - Success or failure of displays, exhibits, and/or programs to properly communicate or interpret the desired messages
 - Accessibility to the museum both economically and physically

5.7 Training and safety programs for operation of vintage railway equipment protect people, equipment, and artifacts, and help ensure the future for all railway museums. An appropriate allocation of the institution's financial and management resources must be devoted to operational training and safety. These programs include:

- a. Development and use of written operating procedures and rules, consistent with recognized and appropriate railroad, rail transit, and railway museum operating practices
- b. Formalized training of operating crews, which includes:
 - Periodic verification of physical and mental qualifications of operators, dispatchers, and instructors
 - Formal instruction and written tests to achieve qualification for various levels of service, administered by trained instructors
 - Disciplinary procedures established for handling infractions
 - Maintenance of individual personnel files to record qualification attempts, successful completions, infractions, and any disciplinary actions. These shall be discarded after an appropriate period of time
 - Frequent inspection and re-evaluation to ensure quality control
 - Written and taught procedures, developed well in advance of actual need, for handling emergencies
- c. Development and use of appropriate dispatching mechanisms to ensure safe operation of equipment. These may include the use of radio, phone, or other communications systems to ensure accurate message transmission and receipt, and to provide the ability to summon emergency services in case of need. The use of appropriate traffic control systems (e.g., hand-held batons or automatic signalling systems) can also help to demonstrate technologies developed in the interest of safety
- d. Development of a formalized system for incident/accident reporting, required in many jurisdictions
- e. Compliance with applicable governmental regulations relating to rail operations

- f. Development of a comprehensive periodic safety inspection program of operating rail equipment based on FRA and/or AAR standards and practices
- g. Trolley museums should monitor the evolution of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) safety programs. FTA regulations initially do not apply to transit museum operations, but may evolve in that direction.

6. Collections Stewardship

Railway museums, like all museums preserving and utilizing collections, should strive to adopt and follow accepted standards in caring for these collections and assuring their long-term survival.

6.1 A comprehensive, written Collections Management Policy must address all aspects of the institution's collections, and relate care and treatment of collections back to the institution's mission.

1. Written collecting criteria includes:
 - a. What the museum will collect, and why
 - b. How each collection will support the museum's mission
 - c. How each collection and its individual items will be used and cared for (e.g., research, display, operation, education, outreach, etc.)
2. Categories of collections should be developed, as the artifacts of railway museums are typically grouped into discrete types of related objects that form the basis for evaluating levels of care, utilization, and documentation. These categories may include the following, and can include further subsets:
 - a. Vehicles of all types, i.e., railway, highway, etc.
 - b. Three-dimensional artifacts (large or small items) that are able to support the museum's mission
 - c. Architecture and archaeological sites such as buildings, architectural fragments, remains, and historical structures preserved for the express purpose of supporting a museum's educational mission
 - d. Engineering works such as track work, ballast, right-of-way, bridges, tunnels, signal systems, overhead wire, and related items
 - e. Documentary collections such as manuscripts, corporate records, timetables, and paper ephemera
 - f. Graphics collections including photographic images, prints, and drawings; engineering documents including prints, tracings, and reproductions; and fine art
 - g. Digital collections, either created from older existing graphics or those which have been acquired recently in digital format
 - h. Museum archives including corporate records of the institution, including board minutes, financial records, publicity items, and collections documentation
 - i. Special collections of those objects rare or unique enough to warrant special recognition and care. Includes items that are extremely valuable, associated with important persons or events, or extremely fragile and/or hard to care for

- j. Storage collections including artifacts or equipment that may have been acquired specifically in order to be saved from destruction. As adequate care may be especially lacking for items in this category, a basic level of caretaking should be established at the outset before such items are accepted. Separate documentation justifying each item's value and relevance to the collection may be desired before accepting additions to this category
3. Artifact and equipment categories by use may also be developed to reflect the museum's operational needs and the responsibility to preserve the collections for the public and for future generations. For example, as operation of historic rail vehicles is a primary interpretive experience at many railway museums, vehicles are often categorized in terms of their intended use, such as:
 - a. Accepted for display in the permanent collection
 - b. Accepted for operation/use in the permanent collection
 - c. Accepted for trade
 - d. Kept for consumption/disposal
 - e. e. On short- or long-term loan or lease
 - f. Kept in storage and/or for study
 4. A policy must be developed to define the roles and responsibilities of all individuals involved in collections management. This policy recognizes the potential for conflicts with regard to individual versus institutional collecting, and inherent issues of valuation and personal gain. The policy may specify:
 - a. A collections management committee that is responsible for establishment and adoption of policy
 - b. The roles of the Administrator, Curator, Collections Manager, Registrar, and others caring for the collection
 5. Acquisition Policies and Procedures
 - a. Objects that are desired for long-term or permanent display should become part of the museum's permanent collection through a formal process of acquisition and accessioning. This process is to follow current accepted standards in the museum field.
 - b. It should be a clearly-stated goal for the institution to own all objects entrusted to its long-term care, even if highly desirable objects are available through lease or loan. Such leases or loans, even if available at minimal or no up-front cost, often divert institutional resources away from museum-owned objects. In extreme instances, such diversion can raise questions of impropriety that could threaten an American museum's 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status.
 - c. Objects considered for accessioning are to be evaluated in terms of:
 - Their relationship to the museum's mission
 - Their rarity or typicality, condition, and provenance
 - The museum's capacity to store and ability to conserve the object
 - Whether the object duplicates others already in the collections
 - Whether there are conditions attached to the acquisition

- Appraisal for insurance, donation documentation, or market value purposes. *Object appraisals must be conducted by persons certified in such work (e.g., recognized as such by tax authorities, insurers, and other museums) and having no connections to prospective donors, recipients, or insurance beneficiaries. To avoid potential conflicts of interest regarding object valuations for donor tax credit or insurance purposes, museums should encourage prospective donors to obtain and pay for appraisals beforehand.*
- d. The actual acquisition process should include:
 - A receipt or record for donated objects
 - A bill of sale for purchased objects
 - A document specifying treatment of loaned objects and condition
 - Records that document all decisions regarding each object
 - Application of accepted registration procedures
- 6. A deaccessioning policy recognizing the museum's trust responsibility is to be developed in advance, for removing items accessioned into the permanent collections. (Note: Objects not accessioned into the museum's permanent collections do not need to go through a formal deaccessioning process.) Whenever possible, and consistent with the museum's fiduciary responsibility, the museum should dispose of deaccessioned objects to other museums, historical organizations, or similar education institutions, and by means of gift, trade, or sale, in that order. The policy addresses:
 - a. Use of funds generated from deaccessioning, restricting such use to acquisition of additional objects or care of museum collections.
 - b. The conditions which must be present for deaccessioning to be considered, including such concerns as non-relevance to mission, poor condition, duplication, or lack of authenticity
 - c. Any conditions or restrictions stated in original deed of gift. If possible, the donor of an object should be notified of any deaccessioning decisions made regarding an item he or she has donated, purchased for, or otherwise made available to the museum
 - d. Conditions by which members of the museum, its governing body, or staff must abide in order to receive any deaccessioned object
- 7. A clearly-articulated access policy must be developed, putting forth criteria for allowing entry or accessibility to museum collections for research and for public use, and criteria for entry or access to restricted areas and/or objects
- 8. A loan policy must be adopted that defines the conditions under which the museum will loan out objects in its collections and accept loans from other institutions and private individuals, or for non-museum, commercial activities such as television or movie production. This policy addresses:
 - a. Outgoing loans/leases
 - Availability of the object and period of the loan
 - Conditions under which the object will be exhibited, handled, stored, insured, and moved

- Duration of the loan
- Fees to be charged
- Information from the borrowing institution as to its loan procedures and care practices
- Evidence of insurance and appropriate financial security

Leases to commercial users such as motion picture/television producers should incorporate the best practices developed by HRA members and promulgated at HRA conferences and other gatherings

b. Incoming Loans

- Term of loan
- Specific purpose for loan/furtherance of museum mission
- Assessment of physical condition, and periodic updates
- Insurance coverage
- Provisions for termination

9. Ethics and Regulations

Because there are recognized ethical standards within the museum field, as well as regulations that affect the conduct of collections management, the Collections Management Policy includes a section on ethical practice, addressing the following:

- a. Allowable uses of any collection object by staff, members, or members of the governing authority
- b. That presentation of collections is done honestly and objectively to the public, in accordance with the best current information, scholarship, and museum practice
- c. That all potential conflicts of interest will be avoided—or, if deemed unavoidable, fully disclosed—with respect to suppliers and staff
- d. Staff use of museum affiliation to promote personal collecting activities
- e. Any and all government regulations that may affect collections management or care (e.g., copyright law, trust law, etc.)

6.2 Conservation Practices

1. Railway museums recognize their responsibility to care for all the objects entrusted to them, and to have a clearly defined policy for performing those functions that is in keeping with general museum practice.
2. Preservation and conservation practices are codified in a written document that provides guidelines for making responsible preservation, conservation, and restoration decisions for each of the museum's collections. These guidelines provide for:
3. Object condition reports
4. Procedures to provide short, medium, or long-term stabilization and storage
5. An evaluation and justification for the level of each object's use for display, operation, etc.
6. A comprehensive restoration plan, developed prior to the initiation of restoration work that addresses:

- The extent of restoration proposed for each object, and scope/amount of alterations from present condition that would be necessary
 - Proposed appearance/time period of restoration, including supporting historical and interpretive justification
 - Use, conservation, preservation, or replacement of original fabric
 - Degree of historical accuracy to be achieved
7. Use of original versus replica material or objects
 8. Documentation procedures, including photographs and written notes of all aspects of work performed
 9. Funding sources and cost estimates
10. Railway museums create categories of objects to determine which objects will be used, which will be stored or given special treatment due to condition, and how all objects in all categories will be used, stored, and cared for.
11. Railway museums must pay particular attention to objects that may be designated for operation. While safe, reliable performance must remain a primary concern, documentation and preservation of original materials, parts, or configuration should be undertaken and samples retained, in keeping with standard museum practice.
12. Restoration and maintenance practices are to be developed that differentiate the type of work performed on an object, based on its classification and use. Restoration serves several different preservation- or operation-related purposes, and is separate from maintenance.
13. Restoration work should take into consideration whether or not any alterations can be reversed at a later date. In order to maintain historical accuracy and authenticity of an item whose service life (along with repairs and modifications) spanned several years, any changes to appearance, structure, or removal/replacement of components should take into account reversibility.
14. Consider adopting the Riga Charter created by the European Federation of Museum and Tourist Railways, which provides for 12 articles of guidelines for restoration and operation of historic railway equipment.

6.3 Spare Parts

1. Because ongoing operation of rail and other historic vehicles often depends on replacement parts, railway museums may have many such items on hand, intended for this purpose. These should be treated as maintenance items, rather than objects accessioned into the permanent collection, as their ultimate use is a consumptive one.
2. If duplicates do not exist, or especially if only one does, options such as fabrication of replica parts or entire replica vehicles must be considered. This way, the “last one” can be preserved as “the original.”
3. Some spare parts and components may have an instructional or educational value in and of themselves. They may also serve as patterns for replication at a later date. These items should be stored and made available accordingly.

4. Appropriate storage facilities must be provided for replacement parts inventories, keeping in mind that:
 - These items are not intended for public viewing
 - Their presence, especially in outdoor storage, can communicate unintended and potentially negative messages about an institution's collections care policies
 - Their usefulness to an institution is greatly diminished if they cannot be accessed and inventoried in a comprehensive manner

7. Museum Facilities and Infrastructure

The infrastructure necessary to sustain railway museum storage, exhibit, conservation, and restoration activities is often much greater than that of many other types of museums. Demonstration railway operations add greatly to these infrastructure requirements, especially as safety and security must remain paramount.

7.1 Museum public facilities – exhibit halls, galleries, event space

The “front of house” of any museum facility is critical to ensuring a positive visitor experience and overall perception of the operation. Many railroad museums lack adequate funding to construct and maintain indoor, climate-controlled facilities that feature exhibit halls, galleries, and event space. Where space permits, emphasis should be given to planning such facilities and funding for their construction in the future. As collections age and require a more climate-controlled environment, indoor facilities become even more important to the survival of railroad museums. Having a plan and vision for housing collections is almost as important as actually constructing facilities. Museums without indoor facilities should seriously consider consulting with museum spatial planning firms that specialize in interpreting and housing large artifacts.

7.2 Restoration workshops are a unique component of many technology museums, and the restoration and maintenance of rail and road equipment requires heavy machinery of many different types. This equipment is capital intensive, requires specialized training, and requires development of procedures for its proper use to ensure protection of those using the equipment, of the collection, and of the environment.

- a. Regulatory areas to be recognized and followed in these museum industrial environments include, among others:
 - All national and local safety regulations
 - Workers Compensation, liability, and health insurer requirements
 - Realizing that public access to restoration facilities can have an entertaining and educational value, policies and procedures should be developed for providing such access. Construction of an overhead gallery or viewing windows can provide safe visitor access and wall space for exhibits explaining the facility and/or the vehicles being restored.
 - Hazardous materials handling and use, including proper observance of procedures such as Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

- Proper labelling, storage, and disposal of waste materials
- Proper labelling and handling of hazardous and/or toxic materials
- b. In addition to training in proper conservation procedures, appropriate restoration/maintenance shops staff members must also be trained in areas such as:
 - Safety awareness and promotion
 - Environmental issues
 - Emergency procedures including CPR and First Aid
 - Special considerations for youth in an industrial environment

7.3 Track, signalling, communications, and power distribution systems must be constructed and maintained to safe and suitable standards, as these are essential to safety of personnel and conservation of collections. When adopting standards, institutions should consider:

- Physical characteristics of rail equipment to be operated (e.g., weight, width, height, wheel profiles)
- Speed and frequency of operations
- Local weather conditions and relevant long-term data (e.g., rainfall as it relates to culvert capacity, frequency/severity of lightning storms, etc.)
- Local utility construction and maintenance standards and requirements
- Applicable local, regional, and national regulations (e.g., overhead wire height restrictions, grade crossing protection installation and maintenance standards)
- Availability of adequate staff and financial resources to provide proper and ongoing maintenance and rehabilitation

Whenever possible, consideration is given to appropriate period appearances of such systems. Regional variations, specific site history, and historical and/or interpretive relationships between equipment and systems may play important roles in determining appearance and maintenance standards of track, overhead, and related technological support systems.

7.4 Security levels at railway museums are dictated by the characteristics of each institution's collections, its site, and its operational environment. By the very nature of railroad facilities, they are sometimes regarded as an attractive nuisance, and as such require disincentives to trespassers. Appropriate barriers, signage, surveillance, and onsite security are essential to prevent intended or unintended damage/theft to collections. Factors to consider include:

- Size of objects and scope of collections
- Fragility and value of collections, artifacts, and equipment
- Surrounding locale (differs greatly for urban vs. rural museums)

An important dimension of security may be taking steps to prevent encroachment of residential development close to operating rail facilities. Purchase of neighboring land as a buffer may be prudent. For large sites, especially rural ones, use of fencing, full property patrolling, and on-site residency should be employed in a manner appropriate to the environment and the museum's experience. Physical security of facilities and collections must remain paramount. In addition:

- Familiarity with local laws and regulations, including zoning, codes, noise ordinances, and public access. Where railroad museums are in proximity to residential areas, it is important to maintain positive relationships with Homeowners Associations, and be familiar with neighborhood covenants. Railroad museums should strive to be good neighbors to their surroundings, which could ultimately garner additional advocacy and support.
- Protection from fire, flood, and vandalism must be developed, and provided in a manner appropriate to the site and the museum's resources
- Issues of controlling illegal dumping, hunting, or use by recreational vehicles may be of great importance
- Emergency preparedness planning, including maintaining close relations with local law enforcement, fire authorities, and abutters, is an important component of effective security. Emergency and disaster plans are to be prepared and adopted as appropriate. It is a good idea to invite first responders to your facility and walk them through your operations and vulnerable areas to gain important feedback from their perspectives. Also provide them with an emergency notification list.
- Extra attention must be given to operational safety in congested areas, and equipment operations conducted in a manner designed to minimize disruption to neighbors

7.5 Other Environmental Considerations

- Railroad museums are primarily outdoor facilities. Whether maintaining an existing site or developing a new one, particular attention should be paid to environmental issues.
- Soil quality and adequate drainage are paramount to establishing a proper base for track infrastructure, etc.
- Attention should also be given to potential threats from wildlife, vermin, and uncontrolled vegetation.

8. Funding

Railway museum funding should be understood in terms of a variety of sources, both short-and long-term in nature that can meet a variety of needs, both capital and non-capital. In nearly all cases, museums need to consider raising additional proceeds to supplement income from admissions, membership, and demonstration rides fees.

8.1 Membership fees, admissions fees, demonstration rides proceeds, and retail proceeds have historically provided funding for non-capital (operating) expenditures at railway museums. These sources of funding are continuous and ongoing, and this use is considered appropriate by the larger museum community. In the long term, however, these funds in most cases will not be adequate to cover the additional costs of increased staffing, capital improvements and educational programming.

8.2 It is essential for railroad museums to have a clear understanding of the needs within their communities, and attempt to address them as closely as possible while still pursuing their missions. By doing so, communities will embrace museums and endeavor to support their operations. This reciprocity should result in a win-win scenario for museums and their communities. The same goes for foundations and individuals who wish to provide support to their communities. Finding a “match” for their missions and goals is the key to philanthropic support of railroad museums. Establishing lines of communication with localities and potential funders, and making them stakeholders in the museum’s success, and in some cases recruiting them for board service, will help cement relationships.

8.3 At times, individual donors or groups of donors, by the size of their gifts or force of their personalities, have directed the priorities of institutions to reflect their personal goals and desires. These donors remain valuable funding sources. However, museums must take charge of actively setting and directing institutional priorities, and developing the necessary resources to achieve them, rather than allowing these priorities to be set and driven solely by donor-directed funding mechanisms.

8.4 Museums must develop funding priorities, expressed in terms of both short-term budgets and long-range fiscal planning, to address the non-capital needs of the institution. These needs include administration, collections conservation and acquisition, exhibits development, and educational programming. Establishment of endowments for maintenance and/or operations is a recommended approach.

8.5 Development of fundraising strategies must be aimed at meeting the needs and goals of the institution rather than simple individual desires or wishes. Partnerships should be developed with the local educational, commercial, and political communities for support and funding. Funding strategies might include annual giving, institutional membership, and planned giving programs

8.6 Acknowledgement of support, along with periodic accurate reporting of results, is just as important as solicitation. Museums should keep their stakeholders informed, share their needs, and successes in order to maintain their support.

8.7 Commercial and fundraising uses of an institution or its resources must not compromise the institution's mission.

9. Financial Accountability

Most museums are not-for-profit organizations, with U.S. museums predominantly classified as 501(c)(3) in the IRS tax code. Being exempt from taxation comes with a responsibility – selfless service to the community, accountability & transparency, and holding collections in the public trust.

9.1 Funds Management

Museums have a fiduciary responsibility to their stakeholders and the communities they serve to manage funds in a manner that reduces risk and ensures adherence to its mission. Earned income (from operations, retail, special events, rentals, etc.) should be tracked separately from gifts and grants – typically from individuals and organizations. Those gifts which are solicited for specific activities, whether operations or capital projects, must be accounted for separately and restricted to those projects as dictated by law. Restricted funds must be carefully managed by the museum's leadership, with accurate and timely updates on their use made available to the donors.

9.2 Reporting

Museums have an important responsibility to provide timely and accurate reporting of its finances to funders, stakeholders, and their communities. Absolute transparency should be maintained in all reporting, leaving no doubt about the museum's sources of income and use of funds, while at the same time respecting any expressed donor wishes to remain anonymous. Reporting should follow general accepted accounting practices for non-profits, which typically take into account programming, administration, and projects (including capital expenditures).

9.3 Tax-Exempt Status

It is essential that each organization have a qualified person on hand to research and have an understanding of the requirements associated with maintaining tax-exempt status, whether in-house or an outside contractor. Timely and accurate reporting of the museum's financial activities to local, federal and state agencies is a requirement that must be observed. First and foremost for U.S. non-profits is the IRS Form 990, which must be submitted annually by the set due date, or with extensions granted through the request process in advance. Form 990s should be reviewed and/or prepared by a professional outside source and reviewed by the museum's leadership before submittal.

Likewise, other reporting such as employee withholdings (if the museum has paid staff), state sales tax, unemployment insurance, etc. should be thoroughly researched and acted upon in accordance with deadlines.

10. Related Business Activities

Operating a railway heritage attraction can be financially challenging. Relying solely on ticket sales or admissions can leave an organization short of meeting cash requirements, and hurt the chances of the organization's long term sustainability.

Many opportunities exist, however, to use facilities, museum sites and the collection for events to earn extra revenue, supporting the organization's core preservation mission and enhancing the abilities to restore and maintain the collection. Virtually every organization has the ability to engage in some forms of related business activities.

Lastly, related business activities offer an ability for an organization to generate more revenue - by allowing the organization's core assets to be utilized for more. Most railway heritage assets sit behind closed gates for much of the time. Making them accessible for special events and activities often sees them used and generating revenue more of the time - a key element in increasing the cash available for heritage preservation. Resting assets do not contribute cash, working assets do.

A good question to ask when planning a new building or exhibit - what will its core use or interpretation be, and what else can we do with it to generate more revenue for the organization? For example - can your railway station also be a site for room rentals for meetings in the closed hours, or a tea room operation for example - as well as the functioning station for your operations?

These are just some examples, the range of possibilities are only limited by your imagination and the physical confines of each museum or heritage railway operation. Some HRA members have extensive experience in these areas and are pleased to offer expertise to others developing these kinds of activities.

10.1 Community Facility

By their very physical nature, railway museums tend to be fairly large in size, necessary due to the sheer size of the physical assets such as rolling stock, and the reality of trackage needs to house (and operate) the collection. Unique locations and venues are in demand these days.

These uses present opportunities to sell and provide things to the function such as train rides, and to direct extra traffic to the museum store and other on-site facilities. This is also a way to build considerable community goodwill as part of the process - and certainly aids marketing and fundraising as well.

10.2 Special Dining Experiences

A great way to introduce others to your organization is to offer things like a private dinner aboard a heritage railcar. These packages involve the museum and often constitute a

great fundraiser; they can be auctioned off at charity events and bring new constituents to your location where they can discover the work being done for this heritage preservation.

Unique experiences are in demand and a good way for museums to bring people to their sites.

10.3 Events and Rentals

This is an area where every railway preservation organization can benefit, that being the rental of some or all of your site and assets for special events and functions. Even where your facility is mostly outdoors, opportunities to rent portions of your site or specific facilities exist. Rentals are also great opportunities to have new people discover your facility and what you do.

A railway museum can design facilities specifically to enhance this kind of business to augment revenue - consider a dual purpose exhibition hall that is also designed to handle large banquets and functions.

10.4 Filming Site

The movie and video commercial industry is always looking for unique facilities. Railway museums and tourist railways can offer this industry access to railway equipment from many eras, and places where it can be operated for the industry off the general system or away from congested downtown locations. Operating railways and transit agencies are there to serve their customers and find things such as filming disruptive to their core operations. They also have safety concerns with these kinds of needs. But your operation can be considered a private railway.

Railway museums and tourist railways can often provide a dedicated site where the rail operations can be set up solely for filming requirements, making it effective for the filming as well as flexible. It is important that safety not be compromised in these situations - the railway operation must adhere to its Safety Management plan and operating rules.

Film contracts can be very profitable and can leave lasting legacies that benefit the railway. Working with the film industry can also be demanding and they have a unique set of requirements, some of which may not fit your mission. The use of an industry professional as your agent is recommended. Several HRA members have extensive experience with the industry, and are always willing to provide guidance and assistance.

10.5 Railway Operational Training

Railway Museums and Tourist Railroads have opportunities to use their facilities and operating equipment as a base for railway training. Having a captive yard area allows this kind of training to be done by your own crews without the challenges to your clients of working with a major operating railway. Key client candidates for this are industrial or port

operations, where safety training around or on moving railway equipment is needed, particularly in a low speed switching environment.

10.6 New Guest Experiences

There are many opportunities to generate funds from extra charges even right in your regular operations. For example, run a locomotive or streetcar, escape rooms using rail cars, and hand pump car races.

Every railway preservation facility should inventory the resources they can make available, and the opportunity they have to support activities - with either staff or volunteers - to generate new revenues for the organization.

11. Accessibility

Museums must make facilities and operating equipment accessible to all, to the extent this can be done without compromising historical integrity, collections security, and visitor safety.

11.1 Museum buildings and facilities must be accessible as defined by state and/or federal law; in the U.S., the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and subsequent amendments (ADAAA, 2009) are the relevant documents to reference. Specific information is contained in standards set by the American National Standards Institute; such regulations generally exempt historic vehicles if historic quality would be compromised. Historic buildings do not receive a blanket exemption, especially in the case of buildings receiving substantial remodeling or alteration. However, some U.S. states also have historic building codes, which offer alternative solutions to providing accessibility, among other items.

11.2 Museums must devote an appropriate portion of their resources to developing strategies that provide for intellectual and/or physical access to collections by all, regardless of ability or disability. Museums should consult with experts in the field of accessibility when altering or constructing new facilities in order to avoid the increased expense of refitting facilities found not to be in compliance.

12. Corporate Relations

Railroads are generally commercial pursuits undertaken for shareholder benefit; transit facilities are generally owned by governmental agencies ultimately responsible to the public. Relationships with these and all other business entities require business-like and professional conduct at all times.

12.1 HRA member museums should strive to promote and maintain positive long-term relationships with all business entities (“companies”) they come in contact with, both public and private and especially including rail operators.

12.2 Museum contacts with companies should be channelled through, and limited to, specific museum representatives designated by the institution, who have authority to negotiate on behalf of their institution. Expressions of interest in or requests for equipment or services should be in writing, and directed to the proper official within the company. Clearly identified exploratory discussions may be needed for a museum's governing authority to make a proper decision. Transactions with companies should be ratified by the museum's governing authority or its designee, which should additionally ensure that the museum's financing arrangements or other resources permit transactions to be completed without delay.

12.3 Inquiries or requests to companies should be supported by a business plan which clearly identifies:

- a. The equipment or services of interest
- b. The intended use, presentation, and/or interpretation
- c. The historic or operational rationale for the request
- d. Services or assistance requested from the company
- e. Benefits to the company arising from the transaction
- f. The museum's mission, goals, and relevant achievement
- g. Relevant information regarding the museum's financing of the transaction
- h. Notification to FRA where applicable and adherence to any rules and regulations

12.4 It is unethical for anyone to represent him/herself as the authorized agent of a museum for any purpose whatsoever when such is not the case.

12.5 Transactions should be completed in a timely manner. If an unexpected delay occurs, the museum must notify the company or agency of the current status and of subsequent developments.

12.6 Museums must promptly acknowledge the cooperation and assistance of companies in an appropriate manner.

12.7 Museums must be sensitive to protecting corporate images in the storage, display, and conservation of equipment and artifacts. Subsequent restoration should preserve, present, and interpret in a historically and environmentally responsible manner, and properly respect the company or agency, the profession, the museum, and the community at large. Photographs of restored artifacts, or other appropriate tokens or expressions of gratitude, may be provided to the company in recognition of its assistance. Museums must be particularly sensitive to inappropriate use of corporately identified equipment or objects during commercial use.

12.8 Museum personnel may need to obtain written permission from authorized company or agency officials prior to entering their property, and must conduct themselves properly and safely at all times while a guest.

13. Community Relations

It is increasingly important for museums not to be insular – a very important factor in long-term survival of rail museums. They need to be engaged with and relevant to area residents and businesses – broad range of supporters if the extraordinary happens – become an integral part of community. The ultimate goal should be to position the museum so it is looked upon by the community as an asset that deserves the community's interest and support.

13.1 Local, Regional and State Community

It is important to be involved in local community groups:

Chamber of Commerce, join and attend meetings and possibly host meetings

Local Tourism Promotion Agencies (CVBs), join and participate in marketing programs

Other charities – foster joint projects, donate admission tickets to their fundraising events, etc.

13.2 Museum Community

Join and attend conferences for state and local museum groups

Present seminars at conferences, apply for awards for great projects

Interact with other museums in your city and county and cross-market

13.3 Elected & Local Officials

Invite elected and local officials to museum one-on-one for a special tour(s)

Hold ribbon cutting or ground breaking events, annually if possible, to demonstrate progress to local officials

Make sure they are on your mail and electronic distribution lists for newsletters and other announcements

14. Advocacy – Speak Up!

More and more, museums find themselves having to compete in an environment with many other opportunities for a potential visitor's leisure time and discretionary spending – often competing with for-profit attractions. They also must exist in a world of increasing costs and use of other precious resources for their daily operations and capital projects. For this reason, museums must make their importance and value known to the outside world. In some cases, their very existence depends on advocating for their continued support and stature in the community. Museums must carefully craft their message and deliver it to decision makers that can positively influence their environment, if not provide direct support.

14.1 Gathering Data on Visitation and Service to the Community

One of the essential components to museum advocacy is gathering information about its audience, including visitation numbers, demographics, and geographic location of their market. This information is important, in that it shows the relevancy and importance of the museum's programs and services to stakeholders, funders, and the communities they serve. In most cases, museums will require outside services of organizations and individuals experienced in gathering and interpreting this information, as well as formatting it for presentation and understanding by stakeholders.

Once information is gathered, impact statements can be created and used as a powerful tool to show the museum's financial contributions to the community. Economic and educational impact statements in particular are useful when talking with community leaders, stakeholders, and funders.

14.2 Strategic Partnerships

The term "strength in numbers" definitely applies to museums advocacy. When addressing a cause, issue or need, museums should look for opportunities to work with other museums or similar institutions to make the case for support. For example, museums can partner on advocacy initiatives to show collective visitation to their facilities which shows synergy for their contributions to the community. By doing so, the cultural, educational, and economic needs met by the participating museums can be collectively addressed for future support.

14.3 Relationships

Building relationships with policy makers, be it state or federal, is an excellent way to have a positive influence on a museum's environment and secure public funding. Policymakers often rely on information from professionals in the field to help make informed decisions. In many cases, dialogue with Legislators and their staff can be an educational process. Arming them with factual information about how continued support of our cause as museums will benefit their districts will oftentimes lead to a meaningful debate and an informed vote.

14.4 The Broader Picture

What may appear out of reach for small localized museums in the way of state and federal funding for improvement and enhancement, is actually available through grants to qualified applicants. Advocacy for continued funding of these programs is a priority of most museum associations. It is important that the railroad museum community participate in the process. It is an excellent learning process, helps build relationships with associations & colleagues, and provides a big picture of our field. The two principle U.S. associations that offer excellent resources to our field are the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) and American Association for State and Local History (AASLH).

In the last decade, museums advocacy has become more of an exact science, particularly at state and national organizations. AAM is the best example of a national umbrella organization that has a very effective and far-reaching advocacy program. Since 2008, AAM has held an annual “Advocacy Day” on Capitol Hill, with a very well planned and executed program employing foot soldiers from the nation’s museums – mostly staff from their member organizations.

Advocacy Day typically champions national causes such as continued Federal funding for the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Office of Museum Services (programs and services available to most museums by application). But, by local constituents in the museum field taking the appeal to their congressional offices on Capitol Hill, a powerful collective message is sent to Congress in support of museums. At the same time, local conversations can take place about a specific museum’s contributions and needs back home in their districts. These conversations can also address other important programs and issues such as continued Federal funding for National Endowment for the Humanities and National Endowment for the Arts grants, and new tax laws for charitable giving.

AAM has several resources available online that include powerful messages and statistics about the impact of museums nationwide, including the fact that more people visit museums annually than attend all sporting events combined. This powerful statement resonates with decision makers in communities, and adds weight to local museums’ messages.

Many other opportunities exist for advocacy at the state and local level. Through associations and strategic partnerships, museums can foster support and cultivate a new generation of stakeholders. In general, partnerships are seen as positive, cooperative relationships that indicate their participant’s willingness to work for the greater good of the community. This is true with private funders as well. Effective state level organizations can provide key assistance when potentially harmful legislation is proposed such as limiting or eliminating tax exempt status for museums or their facilities.

14.5 Other Important Fronts

The railroad museum field has opportunities to participate on other fronts, including historic preservation and rail rights-of-way issues. Organizations such as the National Trust for Historic Preservation, as well as local preservation associations, are important resources for museums to reach beyond their borders and save important aspects of our railroad heritage.

15. Disaster Plan

The development of a Disaster Preparedness/Emergency Response Plan is often put off by museums until it is too late. As part of any collections care program, a disaster plan should be one of the key elements to ensure minimal exposure and damage should an unfortunate catastrophic event occur. Railroad museums by their very nature are subject to increased exposure and damage from weather events and other outdoor threats. In response to these increased threats, a unique disaster plan should be created that addresses particular areas of exposure for the museum and its surroundings.

In accordance with AAM's Core Documents, the required elements of a disaster preparedness/emergency response plan should:

- Includes preparedness and response plans for all relevant emergencies and threats (natural, mechanical, biological, and human)
- 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.

Further, the disaster plan should reflect the museum's unique history, community, collections, and governance. However, the following elements should be found in the plan:

- Table of contents and introduction.
- Emergency contact information.
- Disaster preparation procedures.
- Emergency response procedures.
- Facility information.
- Supplies.
- Prevention and risk management.
- Clean-up and salvage procedures.
- Evacuation plans.
- Communications.
- Forms and checklists.

Further information can be found at www.aam-us.org

16. Strategic Plan

The roadmap to a museum's successful mission and vision is a Strategic Plan.

Every museum should have strategic institutional plan that is board-approved, multi-year, aligned with the museum's mission, and contains measurable goals and methods by which the museum can evaluate success. A viable strategic institutional plan includes prioritized action steps, establishes timelines, and assigns responsibilities for implementing the plan. It also assesses and addresses resources needed to see the plan to fruition. It is often supplemented by an implementation or an operating plan that puts the decisions made in the institutional plan into practice. Implementation plans address day-to-day operations or one specific operational area, such as collections, business, development or education.

There are many resources available to museums that choose to embark on the strategic planning process. Those resources include digital, professional strategic planners, and museum planning firms. Creating a strategic plan is as much about the process as the final product. It is important that museums engage internal and external stakeholders in the process in order to develop a plan that is embraced by all. Implementation of a strategic plan has a far greater chance of success when the museum's leadership, its stakeholders, and the community it serves achieve buy-in from the beginning.

Strategic Plans should be updated periodically to monitor success and address the changing needs of the organization and the audience it serves. While they should be a living document adaptable to change, strategic plans should also serve as a bridge to provide continuity as a museum's leadership evolves.

Appendices

A. Definition of Terms

Accession: The formal process of creating an immediate, brief, and permanent record of an object for which the museum has title and assigning a unique control number to the object.

Accuracy: The degree to which objects, operations, equipment, practices, etc. represent and/or remain specific to a given time period, geographic region, railroad, locale, and/or architectural or cultural heritage.

Atmosphere: The somewhat intangible aura, 'feel' or 'look' that is structured to enhance the experience a museum is trying to present. The sights, sounds, smells and impressions left with visitors, staff and the general public.

Building (or New Construction): A structure having little or no original fabric or historic relevance to the museum's mission (i.e. a visitor center or shop space).

Civil Engineering: The specific railroad structure that consists of the sub-base, base, ballast, cross ties, rail, overhead, bridges, right-of-way and supporting elements such as signals or grade crossing protection. Overhead is the structure of wire, supporting pieces and energizing equipment utilized on electric railways. Specific documentation related to track should include history of construction, evidence of ownership/use, evaluation of historic significance and extent of preservation/restoration to original or period form.

Conservation: Planned management of a collection to prevent deterioration, exploitation, destruction or neglect

Consumption/disposal: A specific class of objects not accessioned into the permanent collection, primarily designed to be used or depleted; as by supplying parts for other equipment, as a pattern for replication, through regular use, or by scrapping to supply funds for other museum needs.

Deaccessioning: The formal museum process of removing an accessioned object from the permanent collections by due process and legal means.

Display: A specific class of objects accessioned into the permanent collection to be used primarily for display, interpretation, and long-term protection in an authentic state. Not intended to be consumed, altered, or worn out through regular use.

Extent: The proportion of original versus replica items or equipment, or the degree of overall 'look' or 'feel' that is to be preserved or re-created.

Fidelity to Period: The degree to which a time period will be adhered to.

Loan/lease: A specific class of objects to which the museum does not hold title. Items may or may not be subject to other museum conservation/preservation practices.

Maintenance: The ongoing systematic work performed on objects, machinery, structures, etc., designed to enable them to continue to reliably perform their intended functions. Maintenance records are kept indefinitely for each object, structure, or other item considered part of a museum's collection.

Operation/use: A specific class of objects accessioned into the permanent collection that are primarily to be used for operation on a regular or semi-regular basis. Original fabric,

machinery, material or appearance may be secondary to safe and reliable function. May be further formally sub-classified as a demonstration collection-to be operated heavily, kept in general historical form though materials may be substituted for safety; may include creating replicas or near-replicas for operating use; or equipment designated for limited use to ensure preservation, yet available for some operation to supplement normal role as static exhibits.

Part or Spare Part: An item whose intended use is to replace a similar item in a collection object. A part is not an accessioned item of the collection. Museums should appropriately sort, identify, store, and inventory all parts.

Permanent Collections: The collected, accessioned objects of a museum, acquired and preserved because of their potential value as examples, as reference material, or as objects of aesthetic or educational importance, all relating to the museum's stated purpose. Collections justify a museum's existence.

Preservation: The act of keeping an object intact and safeguarding it from any further changes beyond those which it has already undergone.

Provenance: The origin, source, history, and cultural and historical significance of an object.

Registration: The formal museum practice of creating, controlling and maintaining information about all objects owned by and in the care, custody and control of the museum.

Replica: The use of new or non-historic materials or items to accurately duplicate an original object.

Restoration: The act of returning an existing object to a documented historic appearance and condition (whether as-built or later in its history) through treatments such as cleaning, painting, removing later additions, replacing missing parts, etc. Original fabric or exact reproduction parts, finishes, or materials may be used. All work is based on a specific restoration plan for that object. If an object is restored and intended for operation or demonstration, subsequent work performed to ensure continued use is often not classified as restoration. (The 1995 Secretary of the Interior's Standard for the Treatment of Historic Properties provide a widely recognized set of standards and guidelines for restoration and other preservation projects.)

Site: An integrated complex of structures, buildings, track, and physical plant, etc.

Storage/study: A specific class of objects which the museum has acquired to save from destruction, for future reference, or for some future project, for which the museum does not presently have funds. Written documentation explains the object's historic significance, relevance to the collection, and anticipated use.

Structure: An enclosed or semi-enclosed space that a human is capable of entering, being in or standing on. A structure contains all or part of its original fabric and has a purpose related to the museum's mission.

Time: The specific year or period of years to be re-created.

Trade: A specific class of objects not accessioned into the permanent collection, designed to be sold or traded for the benefit of the museum's permanent collections.

B. Staff Position Definitions:

Archivist: appraises and organizes permanent records and historically valuable documents, participates in research activities based on archival materials, and directs or oversees cataloging, retrieval, reproduction, indexing, accession, deaccession, and safekeeping of such materials.

Business manager: is responsible for financial management which may include budgeting; accounting; purchasing; administering personnel procedures, salaries, and benefits; handling contracts; and maintaining endowment, fund-raising, and tax records. Museum store and food service managers may assist.

Conservator: coordinates and oversees examination, repair, and conservation of historically significant items such as rail vehicles and smaller artifacts, documents, furnishings, ethnological materials, or textiles. Examines and tests properties of objects to determine condition, need for repair, methods of preservation or restoration, and authenticity, and works with curatorial and facilities maintenance staff to assure use of proper handling, mounting, care, packing, shipping, and storing techniques.

Curator: a railway museum specialist providing management and interpretation for all objects in collections. Makes recommendations for acquisition, deaccession, attribution, and authentication of objects; and publishes the results of research about objects in collections. Archivists, collection managers, conservators, editors, librarians, and registrars may assist.

Development officer: plans, organizes, directs, and coordinates ongoing and special project funding programs. Confers with management and board to determine needs; develops public relations materials; identifies potential supporters and contributors; plans and coordinates special fund drives and benefit events; establishes ongoing support programs; writes and submits grant proposals; provides proper follow-up and contributor recognition.

Educator: develops interpretive exhibits and programs, facilitates public access to objects, and provides docent training. Exhibit designers and curatorial staff may assist.

Executive director: Serves as chief official for overseeing all staff-related activities. Assures understanding of and adherence to directives of governing board; provides input and feedback to board from staff; assists board in establishing organizational vision, personnel policies, and institutional objectives.

General Manager: is responsible for business/railway practices (financial management, membership development, public relations, and railway and structures operations) provides conceptual leadership through specialized knowledge of business/railway procedures to facilitate staff activities and execute governing board direction.

Librarian:

Membership officer: fosters membership benefits to attract and retain the interests of a broad museum public by hosting special programs, maintaining membership records, and publishing a newsletter. Editors, educators, business managers may assist.

Museum administrator: responsible for assuring adherence to consistent and professional practices (acquisition, preservation, research, and interpretation) while

keeping museum true to its mission. Provides conceptual leadership, through specialized knowledge of museum discipline, to establish policies which facilitate staff activities in keeping with governing board directives.

Museum director:

Public relations officer: promotes the museum by establishing useful relationships between the museum's mission and the perceived needs and interests of its various publics. Museum program staff may assist.

Superintendent of railway equipment shop: implements the recommendations of the curatorial staff with safe and proper procedures in the care and management of railway equipment collections.

Superintendent of railway operations: administers policies for supervising and training operating crews in safe and proper railway practices. Museum program staff and operations instructors may assist.

Superintendent of ways and structures: maintains the buildings, communication systems, grounds, and railway for the safety of people and collections with consideration for their usefulness in interpretation of collections. Museum program and railway operations staff may assist.



Board members of the Tourist Railway Association (TRAIN) and the Association of Railway Museums (ARM) pose following their agreement to merge the two organizations and create the Association of Tourist Railroads and Railway Museums (ATRRM), later HeritageRail Alliance (HRA). Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, Strasburg, PA, spring, 2010

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