

## *Beyond Our Boundaries*

*A Report on the Baseline Inventory of the Smithsonian's Active Strategic Partnerships with External Organizations*



Smithsonian Institution

Office of Policy and Analysis

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*Cover "Wordle" created from 521 Smithsonian partnership working titles*  
<http://www.wordle.net/>

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## Unit Acronyms

AAA	Archives of American Art	OEC	Office of Exhibits Central
ACM	Anacostia Community Museum	OFEO	Office of Facilities Engineering and Operations
AP	Accessibility Program		
APAP	Asian Pacific American Program	OGC	Office of the General Counsel
ASEA	Assistant Secretary for Education and Access	OGR	Office of Government Relations
CFCH	Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage	OFI	Office of Fellowships and Internships
CHNDM	Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum	OHR	Office of Human Resources
		OIR	Office of International Relations
DUSCIS	Deputy Under Secretary for Collections and Interdisciplinary Support	OP&A	Office of Policy and Analysis
		OS	Office of the Secretary
FSG	Freer and Sackler Galleries	OSP	Office of Sponsored Projects
FONZ	Friends of the National Zoo	OUSFA	Office of the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration
HMSG	Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden	OUSHAC	Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art and Culture
IMPE	International Museum Professional Education	OUSS	Office of the Under Secretary for Science
		SA	Smithsonian Affiliations
MCI	Museum Conservation Institute	SAAM	Smithsonian American Art Museum
NASM	National Air and Space Museum	SAO	Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
NMAAHC	National Museum of African American History and Culture	SCBI	Smithsonian Center for Conservation Biology
NMAfA	National Museum of African Art	SCEMS	Smithsonian Center for Education and Museum Studies
NMAH	National Museum of American History	SE	Smithsonian Enterprises
NMAI	National Museum of the American Indian	SERC	Smithsonian Environmental Research Center
NMNH	National Museum of Natural History	SIA	Smithsonian Institution Archives
NPG	National Portrait Gallery	SIL	Smithsonian Institution Libraries
NPM	National Postal Museum	SISP	Smithsonian Institution Scholarly Press
NSRC	National Science Resources Center	SITES	Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service
NZP	National Zoological Park	SLC	Smithsonian Latino Center
OA	Office of Advancement	SMSFP	Smithsonian Marine Station at Fort Pierce
OCEA	Office of Communications and External Affairs	STRI	Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute
OCIO	Office of the Chief Information Officer	TSA	The Smithsonian Associates
OCON	Office of Contracting & Personal Property Management		
ODIV	Office of Diversity		

## Beyond Our Boundaries

### *A Report on the Baseline Inventory of the Smithsonian's Active Strategic Partnerships with External Organizations*

*The new strategic plan for the Smithsonian singles out partnerships as a key component of the Institution's next era. In order to tackle the big ideas that are important to our nation and the world, partners are needed that can provide strengths that the Smithsonian does not have. The ideal partnership is one where each party fills a role the other cannot and together they form a whole that is needed.*

G. Wayne Clough, *The Torch*, March 28, 2011

## Introduction

As part of the Crossing Boundaries strategic priority of the Smithsonian Institution (SI) Strategic Plan (2010-2015), the Institution will:

*Marshal Smithsonian resources across disciplines and strengthen relationships with our external partners to bring more expertise to bear on society's most complex challenges.* (Strategic Plan, page 4)

Toward this end and to better understand the current situation, the Office of the Secretary (OS) asked the Office of Policy and Analysis (OP&A) to conduct a survey of all Smithsonian units to assemble a baseline inventory of unit active partnerships with external organizations. In a memo to unit directors, Secretary Clough outlined the purpose of the partnership inventory and how the database would serve central and unit managers and other stakeholders. It would:

- Increase awareness by external stakeholders of the degree, substance, and scale of Smithsonian partnerships.
- Increase visibility of external partnerships among the units and point to emerging areas for strategic partnering, opportunities to leverage existing partnerships, and areas to avoid overlap.

- Surface best practices and ways to improve partnership development processes.

This paper reports on the results of the partnership baseline survey conducted by OP&A during spring/summer 2011.

## Background

Recognition of the need to leverage Smithsonian strengths through external partnerships, as well as improve inter-SI unit collaboration, has been the impetus for a number of recent studies and initiatives within the Institution.

In 2009, the inaugural class of the Smithsonian Leadership Development Program (SLDP) chose improving internal and external collaborations to accomplish the Smithsonian's mission as the topic for its group management project. The resulting report, *Improving Smithsonian Collaborations*, contains 11 recommendations for facilitating the initiation, development, structuring, oversight and evaluation of strategic collaborations. One recommendation in particular echoes the object of this study, that

*The Smithsonian should implement an effective tracking mechanism and create a database that can collect the primary data on all of the collaborative arrangements in existence at the Institution. (Improving Smithsonian Collaborations, page 19)*

Also in 2009, OP&A issued a report, *Addressing Complexity: Fostering Collaboration and Interdisciplinary Science Research at the Smithsonian*, commissioned by the Under Secretary for Science (OUSS). It was premised on the understanding that the complexity and scope of the major challenges facing the world today require research that spans disciplinary and organizational boundaries and is carried out by teams rather than individuals. The issues addressed by SI researchers, while important, do not necessarily have the scale and weight on their own to interest significant corporate, foundation, or government support. But if they are pursued collaboratively, in ways that raise their visibility, relevancy, and importance, they become better candidates for funding. The OUSS recognized that if the Institution is to realize opportunities to respond to urgent scientific questions, more needs to be done to bring about a change in the current culture of isolation toward greater collaboration and partnering across units and with external organizations.

The two studies noted above were carried out in the same timeframe as the year-long strategic planning initiative resulting in *Inspiring Generations Through Knowledge and Discovery*, the SI Strategic Plan for fiscal years 2010-2015. The new Strategic Plan signaled a deliberate move toward more interdisciplinary and cross-institutional collaboration, in particular around four Grand Challenges – Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe; Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet; Valuing World Cultures; and



Understanding the American Experience – where the Smithsonian could best apply its extensive experience, unique collections and deep expertise. The Strategic Plan also recognized that multidisciplinary solution-finding will require greater partnering with external organizations that can provide the disciplinary expertise, equipment, and other resources not found at SI. One of the pillars of the vision for “A Smithsonian For The 21<sup>st</sup> Century” is

*A collaborative spirit that encourages us to build public and private partnerships and forges strong ties with nations, organizations, and individuals whose interests we share. (Strategic Plan, page 3)*

## **A Brief History of Partnerships at the Smithsonian**

While leveraging Smithsonian capacity through external partnerships is emphasized throughout the new Strategic Plan, such a strategy is not new – the Smithsonian has always been a partnering Institution.<sup>1</sup>

Three of the Smithsonian’s longest running partnerships for curating the national collections are with federal government agencies – the U.S. Department of Agriculture (1881), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Bureau of Fisheries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, 1871), and U.S. Geological Survey (1889). In these arrangements the Smithsonian provides space and support for government specialists who work on economically and medically important plants, insects, animals, minerals, and ores, while Smithsonian staff work on the species and specimens that are not medically or economically important but have scientific value.

One of the Smithsonian’s longest term partnerships is with the U.S. military for exploring expeditions. From its earliest years, the National Museum cosponsored expeditions conducted by a wide array of universities and organizations such as the Western Union Telegraph Company (1865). And long before the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) became part of the Smithsonian in 1946, it was founded in 1923 as a consortium of universities, scientific societies, government scientists, and museums. The Smithsonian was one of the founding partners.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Smithsonian worked with various exposition boards to produce all of the U.S. government’s exhibits for international exhibitions and expositions. When the fairs were over, the Smithsonian would acquire the collections and exhibits for its own use. Also in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, industries often contributed displays of their technical

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<sup>1</sup> Historical information on Smithsonian partnerships provided by Pamela M. Henson, Director, Institutional History Division, Smithsonian Institution Archives

achievements to the National Museum; examples included the pharmaceutical industry, glassmaking, and printing companies.

In its earliest years in the 1890s, to round out its displays, the National Zoological Park (NZP) would “winter” the animals from circuses such as the Adams Forepaugh Show. Animals were often donated to NZP in their retirement.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the establishment of many more enduring partnerships, some of which have now been in existence for over 25 years. For example, in 1955 the Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory moved from its location on the National Mall to Cambridge, MA to form the Center for Astrophysics with Harvard University. The Antarctic Search for Meteorites program (ANSMET), begun in 1976 and jointly run by the Smithsonian, National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), is in its 35<sup>th</sup> year of gathering space rocks that will go in the National Meteorite Collection. And in 1985, the National Science Resources Center (NSRC) was formed by the Smithsonian and the National Academy of Sciences to improve the learning and teaching of science in school districts in the U.S. and internationally.

## **Methodology**

### ***Literature review***

The study team undertook a comprehensive review of the academic and popular literature on the subject of partnerships. It also looked at Smithsonian partnership studies, documents and databases. These included the 2009 SLDP project report, *Improving Smithsonian Collaborations*; Memoranda of Understanding and other establishing documents for key institutional partnerships; and partnership databases such as the Office of General Counsel (OGC) *Matter Report* and the external collaborator field of the EDGE database.<sup>2</sup> An OP&A graduate student intern attended the annual meeting of the National Council for Public-Private Partnerships. Another OP&A intern from Belgium wrote her master’s thesis on Smithsonian partnerships with a focus on educational partnerships. A list of references is found in Appendix A.

### ***Informational interviews to inform survey questionnaire and partnership definition/criteria***

The study team prepared a draft survey questionnaire to collect the information of interest to the Secretary for a partnership inventory. Based on its review of the literature and internal discussions, the study team drafted *Guidance on What Partnerships to Include in*

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<sup>2</sup> Education Data Gathering & Evaluation is a pan-Institutional system for reporting education and outreach performance statistics.

*the Survey*, which included a definition of “partnership” and three criteria – external, organization-level, and active – along with other clarifications and instructions (See Appendix C).

The survey instrument and partnership definition were vetted through interviews with staff at 25 SI units representing the major partnering organizational divisions: Office of the Under Secretary for Science (OUSS), Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art and Culture (OUSHAC), Office of the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration (OUSFA), Assistant Secretary for Education and Access (ASEA), and Deputy Under Secretary for Collections and Interdisciplinary Support (DUSCIS). Input from these reviewers resulted in several iterations of the survey questionnaire and agreement to limit the data collection to **active** SI partnerships with **external organizations** at the **organizational level** (Institution, unit, department) and not at the individual researcher-to-researcher level.

### ***Partnership survey instrument***

The survey instrument was designed to collect basic, readily-available information about existing partnerships without requiring inordinate effort by individual unit respondents. To test the clarity and functionality of the survey, pilot tests were conducted with nine departments in four SI units. A copy of the partnership survey is included as Appendix D.

### ***Administration of online survey***

On March 29, 2011, a memorandum from Secretary Clough was sent to the SI Executive List. It included an explanation of the purpose for the partnership survey and inventory and instructions for each unit director to designate a contact person to interface with OP&A on data collection (See Appendix B). Thereafter, the link to the online survey was sent to the designated contact persons. The survey was administered utilizing Qualtrics online software, and monitored closely by OP&A.

A total of 54 SI units provided names of contact persons to OP&A. OP&A staff then communicated with them to determine if their units had any active strategic partnerships with external organizations, and if so, how best to administer the survey within their units. Fifteen units indicated they had no partnerships. Thirty-nine SI units completed the partnership survey.

### ***Limitations***

OP&A deliberately did not proscribe how a unit should best complete the survey as the process was dictated to some extent by the size of the unit and number of partnerships it was involved in; consequently, there was a good deal of variability in how the units completed the survey. Some contact persons completed the survey themselves, while

others distributed the survey link to those staff persons most familiar with a partnership to fill out. As such, the extent to which the survey accurately captured the entirety of the units' partnerships was dependent on the unit director and his/her designated contact person. It is possible that the submitted partnership information does not exhaust the total number of partnerships.

### ***Data review and analysis***

As units completed the partnership survey, the OP&A study team again corresponded with unit contact persons to verify the number of partnerships entered and resolve issues with the data such as duplicate partnership entries. The study team developed and applied editing specifications to ensure consistency. OP&A analyzed the dataset using SPSS statistical software and generated descriptive frequencies of variables. The dataset will be stored in an Access database for search and report functionality.

### **Definition of Partnership**

As noted above, the three qualifying criteria for inclusion of a partnership in the survey were that the partnership involved at least one external partner, that it was active, and that it was initiated at the organizational level. Units were given a standard definition of partnership that stressed the mutuality of the relationship:

*A collaborative working relationship between two or more organizations that builds on the time, talent, and resources of participants to achieve common goals, and where partners share decision-making, risks and rewards, participation in activities, and responsibility for outcomes. A partnership may or may not involve a financial transaction and may or may not be based on a formal written agreement.*

The definition for the survey intentionally had a broader meaning than the true legal definition of partnership – used, for example, by the Smithsonian Office of the General Counsel – where a party is in a legal relationship in which it can be bound by another party and responsible for that party's actions:

*An association of two or more persons to carry on as co-owners of a business for profit. Partners can legally bind one another and are responsible for each other's partnership-related debts and torts. Legally, a "partnership agreement" is what sets up a partnership.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> Definition provided by Smithsonian Office of the General Counsel, January 2011.

The *Guidance on What Partnerships to Include in the Survey* document, which accompanied the survey, disqualified for inclusion some relationships that typically are not considered partnerships (e.g., acquisitions, loans, unrestricted giving, sponsorships, memberships), but units were given leeway to include relationships if, in their opinion, they involved “substantive, mutual benefits and mutual participation in activities.” Units also decided for themselves if relationships did not meet the definition of partnership; for example, Smithsonian Enterprises determined that licensing agreements were not partnerships.

## **Description of Partnership Inventory Data**

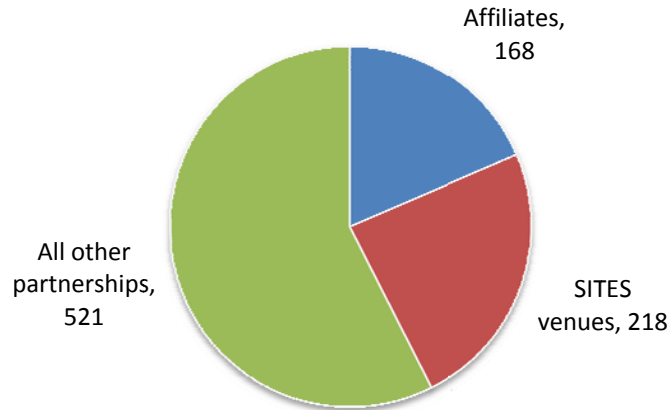
The following five sections of the report describe the characteristics of partnerships reported in the survey, and of the external partner organizations involved in those partnerships. Part six is a discussion of observations drawn from the survey data and suggestions going forward.

## **Part One: Partnerships Overview**

### **Smithsonian active partnerships with external organizations**

A total of **907 individual partnerships** were reported by the **39 SI units** that participated in the partnership inventory. Of those, **168 were Smithsonian Affiliates** and, of the 244 partnerships reported by SITES, **218 were SITES venues** (museums, libraries or other organizations that hosted SITES exhibitions.) Data for each of these groups were submitted with identical partnership information for all survey questions except for the partner name, location, and organization type. While these two categories of partnerships meet the definition of “partnership” for purposes of the survey and the three criteria for inclusion of “active,” “external,” and “organization-level,” the OP&A study team felt that the uniform quality of these substantial groups would skew results and that a better understanding of the state of active external partnerships at the Institution would be gained by separating those partnerships with Affiliates and SITES venues from the data frequencies. Therefore, except where noted, data frequencies in this report are for the **521 individual partnerships** reported exclusive of the two groups of Affiliates and SITES exhibition venues. (See Figure 1).

**Figure 1: Reported Partnerships**



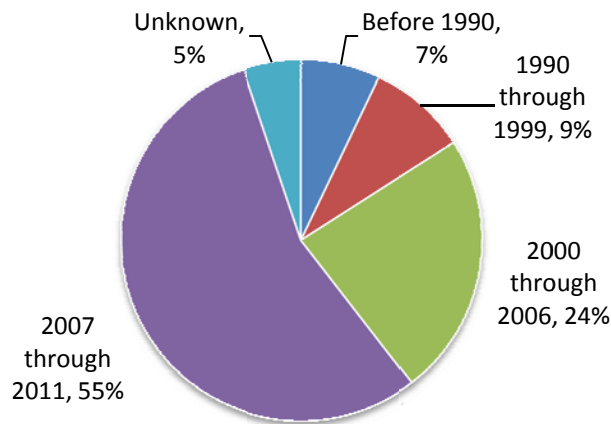
**Years active**

*[Partnerships reporting = 521]*

Respondents were asked approximately how long the partnership had been active. Counting back from when the survey was completed in 2011, the majority (55%) had been active four years or less (began 2007 through 2011). A quarter of partnerships (24%) had been active between five and 11 years (began 2000 through 2006); nine percent had been active between 12 and 21 years (began 1990 through 1999); seven percent had been active for greater than 22 years (began before 1990); and five percent were unknown. (See Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Distribution of Partnerships by Start Year**

*Excluding Affiliates and SITES venues*

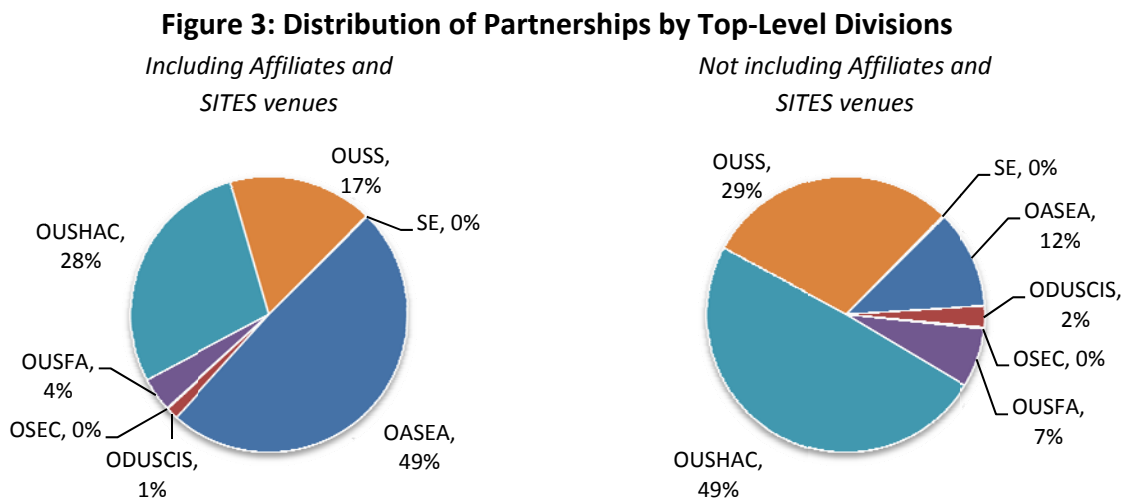


## Partnerships by top-level Smithsonian divisions

[Partnerships reporting = 521]

Units in the Office of the Under Secretary for History, Art and Culture (OUSHAC) reported nearly half (49%) of the partnerships (257). Units in the Office of the Under Secretary for Science (OUSS) reported just under one-third (29%) of the total (153). Units reporting to the Assistant Secretary for Education and Access (ASEA) had 60 partnerships (12%); Office of the Under Secretary for Finance and Administration (OUSFA) units had 36 partnerships (7%); and units of the Deputy Under Secretary for Collections and Interdisciplinary Support (DUSCIS) submitted 13 (3%). The Office of the Secretary (OSEC) and Smithsonian Enterprises (SE) each registered one partnership.

The pie charts in Figure 3 show the distribution by top-level divisions including and excluding the 168 Affiliates and 218 SITES venues.



## Partnerships by unit

[Partnerships reporting = 521]

Close to one-third of the partnerships reported came from three units: National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) (12% or 61); National Museum of American History (NMAH) (10% or 52); and Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM) (9% or 49). Appendix H contains a list of all partnerships submitted by unit.

## Partnerships involving other Smithsonian unit(s)

[Partnerships reporting = 521]

For each partnership, survey respondents were asked to list “other Smithsonian unit(s) involved in the partnership, if any.” One-fifth (21%) included at least one other SI unit as

participating in the partnership. Responses ranged from one other SI unit to “pan-Institutional”.<sup>4</sup>

## **Partnerships by location**

*[Partnerships reporting = 521]*

Looking at the 521 partnerships<sup>5</sup>, 86 percent (446) involved at least one partner with a principal business location in the U.S. and slightly more than one-fifth (21% or 111) involved at least one international partner.

Slightly more than one-third (37% or 192) involved at least one partner in Washington, D.C.

## **Partnerships by organization type**

*[Partnerships reporting = 521]*

Close to one-third of partnerships (31% or 164) involved at least one college or university partner. One-fourth of partnerships (24% or 124) involved at least one NGO partner (non-governmental agency or organization including not-for-profit organizations and foundations). One-fifth of partnerships (20% or 104) involved at least one federal partner (U. S. federal government agency or organization). Around one-sixth of partnerships (17% or 88) involved at least one museum partner (Museum or similar organization [e.g., zoo, aquarium, historical site, science center, etc.]).

Fewer partnerships involved other organization types: 13 percent of partnerships (70) involved at least one foreign government agency or organization in a foreign country and another 13 percent (67) involved a non-museum cultural organization. Ten percent (53) involved a for-profit business; nine percent (48) involved an educational organization below the university-level; and seven percent (34) involved a professional association. State, local and tribal governments and IGOs (intergovernmental organization or agency) appeared as organization types in fewer than five percent of partnerships.

The organization types with which units form partnerships was understandably driven by subject matter. For example, compared with other divisions, a higher portion of OUSS’s partnerships included at least one university, U.S. government, or foreign government

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<sup>4</sup> All 168 Affiliate partnerships listed “most SI museums, program and research units” and all 218 SITES venues listed “various” in response to “other Smithsonian unit(s) involved in the partnership.”

<sup>5</sup> Total is greater than 100% because partnerships could contain both international and domestic partners. One partnership recorded its partners’ locations as “virtual”.



partner; and a higher portion of OUSHAC's partnerships were with NGOs, museums, or other cultural organizations.

## Part Two: Partners

### Number of external partners

*[Partnerships reporting = 521]*

For each partnership, survey respondents were asked, "How many partner organizations are involved in this partnership?"

The 521 partnerships reported in the survey involved a total of **1,141 total external partners**. If the two groups of partnerships with Smithsonian Affiliates and SITES exhibition venues are added in, the total number of external partners comes to 1,527. Not all of these external partners were unique; for example, some units reported different partnerships involving the same partner, and in some cases more than one unit reported having a partnership with the same partner. When the same partners involved in multiple partnerships are accounted for, the number of **unique partners is 855**. The number of unique external partners climbs to **1,208 when Affiliates and SITES venues** are included. Appendix E contains a list of all 1,208 unique partners involved in Smithsonian partnerships.

The number of external partners involved in an individual partnership ranged from 1 to 39. However, the vast majority of partnerships (71%) involved only one external partner. One-eighth (13%) had two external partners and five percent reported three external partners. Partnerships with four, five, and six external partners came in at two percent each; partnerships with more than six partners registered one percent or less of the total. Approximately one-fourth of the 1,141 external partners (304) are attributable to just 16 "mega" partnerships that include between 10 and 39 partners.

### Unique partners by location

Survey respondents were asked to list the principal business location – state for U.S. partners and country for international partners – for each external partner involved in a partnership.

For the 855 *unique* external partners involved in the 521 partnerships, nearly three quarters (74% or 632) were domestic partners (principal business location in the U.S.) and the other one quarter (26% or 220) were international partners.<sup>6 7</sup>

Unique external partners were headquartered in 48 states (not Vermont or Arkansas) plus Washington, D.C., Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. However, with Affiliates and SITES venues, partners were found in all 50 states.

Of the 220 international partners, 12 percent were in China, nine percent in Canada, eight percent in Panama, six percent in the United Kingdom, and four percent each in Austria, the Dominican Republic, France, Germany, and Mexico. Appendix F lists all international partners alphabetically by country.

### **Unique partners by organization type**

Survey respondents were asked to select one or more organizational type for *each* external partner involved in a partnership. Table 1 below shows the number and percentage of the 855 *unique* external partners involved in the 521 partnerships by organization type. The percentage of unique partners belonging to a particular organization type differs somewhat from the percentage of *partnerships* involving at least one partner of that same organizational type since partnerships may include more than one unique partner. For example, 17 percent of unique partners were identified as a college or university – these partners were involved in 31percent of the 521 Smithsonian partnerships.

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<sup>6</sup> Three partners were “virtual”.

<sup>7</sup> Aside from two Affiliates in Panama, all Affiliates and SITES venues were domestic, bringing the percentages to 81% domestic partners (983) and 18% international partners (222).

**Table 1: Percent and Count of Unique External Partners by Organization Type<sup>8</sup>**

<i>Organization Type</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Count</i>
NGO (non-governmental agency or organization including not-for-profit organizations and foundations)	19%	161
Museum or similar organization (e.g., zoo, aquarium, historical site, science center, etc.)	17%	143
College or university	17%	142
Government agency or organization in a country other than the U. S.	11%	90
Non-museum cultural organization (e.g., library, archive, historical society, etc.)	11%	90
U.S. federal government organization	8%	71
For-profit business	7%	56
Educational organization other than a college or university, including a school or school system	6%	54
Professional association	5%	40
Tribal government or organization	3%	23
Local (U. S.) government agency or organization	2%	17
State (U. S.) government agency or organization	2%	13
IGO (intergovernmental organization or agency)	1%	8
Other type of organization	1%	6

***University partners***

As noted above, 17 percent (142) of the unique external partners involved in the 521 partnerships designated “college or university” as their organization type. The addition of Affiliates and SITES venues brings the number of unique college or university partners to 163. Seven universities were involved in five or more partnerships: University of California (6 campuses, 16 partnerships); University of Maryland (2 campuses, 15 partnerships); George Mason University (13 partnerships); George Washington University (10 partnerships); Harvard University (10 partnerships); American University (8 partnerships); and University of Chicago (5 partnerships). Appendix G contains an alphabetic list of all 163 unique partners that indicated college or university as their organizational type.

<sup>8</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could select more than one organizational type.

## Part Three: Developing partnerships

### Assistance sought from central Smithsonian

*[Partnerships reporting = 512]*

The survey asked respondents, “Did you seek assistance from any central Smithsonian office(s) or outside entity(ies) before and/or after entering into this partnership?” Forty-three percent of partnerships (218) sought assistance; 57 percent (294) did not.<sup>9</sup>

There was a difference by SI division units in seeking assistance – 61 percent of science unit partnerships sought assistance compared to 36 percent of OUSHAC unit partnerships and 25 percent of ASEA unit partnerships.

Partnerships involving an international partner were more likely to seek central assistance (62%) than those with a domestic partner (39%).

The likelihood of seeking assistance from central SI did not vary considerably according to the organization type of partner involved in the partnership.

A total of 202 partnerships identified a central unit from which they sought assistance; of those, the majority (60%) sought assistance from the Office of the General Counsel (OGC), followed by the Office of Contracting & Personal Property Management (OCon) (16%) and the Office of Sponsored Projects (OSP) (15%). Assistance was sought less frequently from the Office of International Relations (OIR) (5%), Office of Fellowships and Internships (OFI) (2%), and Office of Human Resources (OHR) (2%). Twenty-nine percent of partnerships listed other units/entities from which they sought assistance in addition to or apart from the central units listed above, for example, Under Secretary offices, Office of Advancement, and Grand Challenge Consortia.<sup>10</sup>

### Level of formality of partnership agreement

*[Partnerships reporting = 504]*

The survey asked respondents to select “what type of agreement exists for this partnership” from the following list:

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<sup>9</sup> If we include the 168 Affiliates and 218 SITES venues, the percent that sought assistance remains the same since the two units essentially cancel each other out – the formal agreement that SA uses with Affiliates is developed with the assistance of OGC, while SITES reported not seeking assistance in its contracts with exhibition venues.

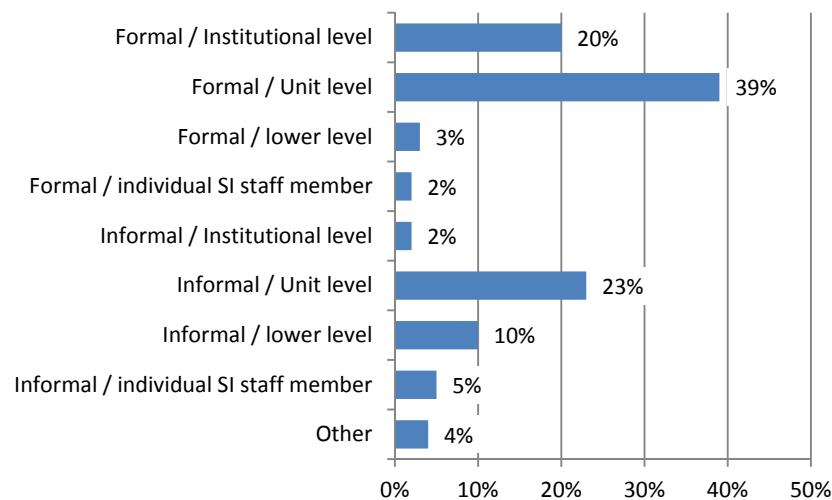
<sup>10</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could include more than one unit/entity.

- Formal written agreement signed at the Institutional level
- Formal written agreement signed at the unit level
- Formal written agreement signed at a lower level
- Formal written agreement signed by an individual SI staff member
- Informal agreement at the Institutional level
- Informal agreement at the unit level
- Informal agreement at a lower level
- Informal agreement by an individual SI staff member
- Other (please explain)

Formal partnerships were primarily signed at the unit (39%) or Institutional level (20%); fewer agreements were reported as signed at a lower level (3%) or by an individual SI staff member (2%). Informal agreements occurred primarily at the unit (23%) and lower (10%) levels; fewer informal agreements were in place through an individual SI staff member (5%) or at the Institutional level (2%). Additionally, four percent of partnerships were classified as an “Other” type of agreement.<sup>11</sup> (See Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Percent of Level of Partnership Agreements**

*Excluding Affiliates and SITES venues*



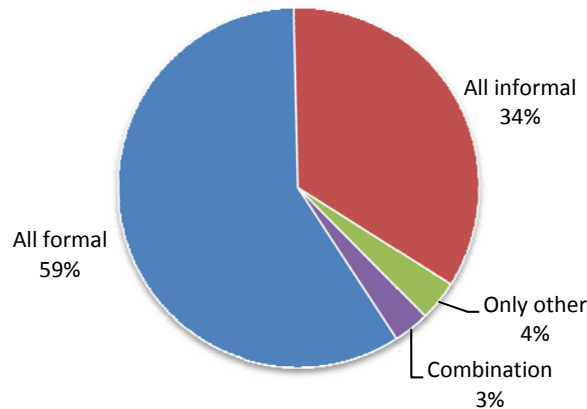
Aggregating the different levels of formal and informal agreements, three-fifths of partnerships (59%) were organized entirely through formal written agreements, that is, if

<sup>11</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents selected multiple responses if multiple agreements were in place.

they had agreements at different levels, they were all formal.<sup>12</sup> One-third of partnerships (34%) relied exclusively on informal agreements. The remaining partnerships were formed either through an “Other” type of agreement (4%) or some combination of formal, informal, and “Other” agreements (3%). (See Figure 5).

**Figure 5: Distribution of Partnerships by Formality of Agreement**

*Excluding Affiliates and SITES venues*



Science and education/access units were more likely than history/art/culture units to have formal partnerships. For the 151 OUSS partnerships, 83 percent were formal. Similarly, for the 60 ASEA unit partnerships, 75 percent were formal. In comparison, 41 percent of the 244 OUSHAC partnerships were formal.

Partnerships involving an international partner were more likely to have a formal written agreement than partnerships involving a domestic partner (76% vs. 54%).

The level of formality was similar across partnerships involving three of the most frequently occurring organization types – college or university (61% formal), federal government (58%), and museum (57%). Formal written agreements were less frequent in partnerships with tribal governments (40%), cultural organizations (47%), and professional associations (47%), but the numbers of those organization types were far fewer.

<sup>12</sup> If we include the 168 Affiliates and 218 SITES venues, the percentage of formal partnerships increases to 80%, since all such partnerships have formal written agreements at the unit level.

## Form of written agreement

*[Partnerships reporting = 329]*

If the partnership was at the “formal written agreement” level, respondents were asked to select the form of agreement/instrument from the following list:

- Memorandum of understanding (MOU)
- Letter/Memorandum of Agreement
- Grant
- Contract
- Teaming agreement
- Non-disclosure agreement
- Other written agreement (Please explain)
- There is no written agreement

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) predominated, with 44 percent (144) of partnerships reporting using that instrument. Another one-fourth (27% or 88) used Letters/Memoranda of Agreement, 16 percent (51) were contracts and eight percent (25) were grants.<sup>13</sup> Just under one-fifth (19% or 63) of partnerships selected “Other written agreement.” The open-ended answers were often explanatory in nature, e.g., “MOU in process,” or were variations on the other selections, e.g., “collaborative inter-institutional agreement.” Others were different kinds of documentation such as a gift agreement or transfer agreement. Some indicated partnerships were established in legislature.

The form of written partnership agreement varied somewhat by top level divisions, for example science units tended to use more MOUs (58% vs. 44% for all partnerships) and education/access units more contracts (30% vs. 16% for all partnerships).

In some cases the organization type involved in the partnership was predictive of the type of agreement used. For example, partnerships with a for-profit business partner used more contracts than on average (50% vs. 16% for all partnerships). Partnerships with professional associations, non-museum cultural organizations (libraries, archives, etc.), educational organizations below the university level, and the federal government used more grants (25%, 14%, 13%, and 13% respectively vs. 8% for all partnerships).

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<sup>13</sup> If we include the 168 Affiliate plus 218 SITES partnerships it changes the percentages to 38% Contracts and 36% Letters/Memoranda of Agreement.

## **Expected duration of partnership**

*[Partnerships reporting = 516]*

Survey respondents were asked: “Is the ending date for this partnership known?” The answer for 70 percent of partnerships (363) was “no.” The Guidance document that accompanied the survey advised respondents to “Answer no if the partnership has no fixed end point, which may include an unspecified number of renewals of the partnership agreement.” For example, in a scenario where a partnership would likely extend beyond the expiration date of the current partnership agreement, respondents would be expected to answer “no.” It must be noted, however, that based on conversations with unit contact persons during the data cleaning phase, the OP&A study team learned that there was inconsistent interpretation of this question where, in the scenario described above, some respondents answered “yes” to ending date known.

## **Part Four: Partnership resources**

Respondents were asked to consider the approximate scale or size of the partnership and estimate the average yearly number of full time equivalent (FTE) Smithsonian and partner staff involved in the partnership. They were given four ranges (“up to 1 FTE”; “more than 1 to 5 FTE”; “more than 5 to 10 FTE”; “more than 10 FTE”) and “do not know” to select from for both SI and external partner(s).

### **Average yearly number of FTEs – Smithsonian**

*[Partnerships reporting = 514]*

Two-fifths (42%) of all partnerships had an average of one or fewer Smithsonian FTE involved in the course of a year. Another one-third (34%) reported “more than 1 to 5 FTE”. The remainder involved “more than 5 to 10 FTE” or “more than 10 FTE” (5% each), or didn’t know (13%).

There was some resource variation by division. The SI staff investment per partnership was greater for science units – almost half (48%) selected “more than 1 to 5 FTE.” By comparison, nearly half of both OUSHAC and ASEA partnerships (48% and 50%, respectively) had 1 or fewer FTE dedicated to a partnership.



## **Average yearly number of FTEs – external partner**

*[Partnerships reporting = 472]*

One-third of survey respondents (32%) did not know the average yearly number of external FTEs dedicated to the partnership. This number is primarily attributable to OUSHAC units, with 46 percent (113) answering this way. One-quarter of partnerships (26%) indicated they involved “up to 1 FTE” and another quarter (25%) had “more than 1 to 5 FTE.” Six percent had “more than 5 to 10” and 11 percent had “more than 10 FTE.”

## **SI share of FTE resources**

*[Partnerships reporting = 467]*

FTE contributions (SI, external partner, or both) were not known in one-third (32%) of the partnerships. Slightly more than two-fifths (44%) of the partnerships had equal SI and partner FTE contributions in the four ranges. In another one-fifth (19%) the external partner FTE contribution was greater than the Smithsonian's. Smithsonian FTEs outweighed partner FTEs in only six percent of the partnerships.

## **Average yearly non-human resources**

*[Partnerships reporting = 515]*

To further approximate the scale of a partnership, respondents were asked to estimate the average yearly dollar equivalent of non-human resources/inputs contributed by *all* parties to the partnership (e.g., financial, facilities and equipment, and in-kind). They were given four dollar ranges (“< \$100,000”; “\$100,000 to \$1 million”; “\$1 million to \$5 million”; “> \$5 million”) and “do not know” to choose from.

Slightly more than half of respondents (54%) selected “less than \$100,000.” Another one-fifth (21%) said “\$100,000 to 1 million.” An additional four percent and three percent selected “\$1 million to 5 million” and “greater than \$5 million,” respectively, while about one-fifth (18%) did not know.

Of the 37 partnerships reporting \$1 million plus in non-human investments by all parties, two-thirds (65% or 24) were with OUSS units.

## Part Five: Purpose and function of partnerships

### Grand Challenge areas

*[Partnerships reporting = 518]*

Survey respondents were asked to select one or more (or none) of the Grand Challenge area(s) that the partnership serves. Approximately half of respondents (54%) selected one Grand Challenge area while about a fourth (28%) selected two Grand Challenge areas. A mere three percent chose three areas, seven percent said the partnership served all four areas, and eight percent selected none.

Close to three-fifths of the partnerships (58%) supported Understanding the American Experience, two-fifths (40%) related to Valuing World Cultures, a little over one-third (36%) served Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet, and 16 percent supported Unlocking the Mysteries of the Universe.<sup>14</sup>

Understandably, science unit partnerships leaned more heavily toward “biodiversity” (70%) and “universe” (27%), while history, art, and culture unit partnerships were more likely to serve “American experience” (78%) and “world cultures” (58%). Both OUSS and OUSHAC units selected an average of 1.5 Grand Challenge areas for each partnership.

ASEA unit partnerships served “American experience” (77%) and “biodiversity” (52%) by more than two to one compared to “universe” (20%) and “world cultures” (22%).<sup>15</sup> DUSCIS units were more likely to support multiple Grand Challenges, with close to three selected for each partnership on average.

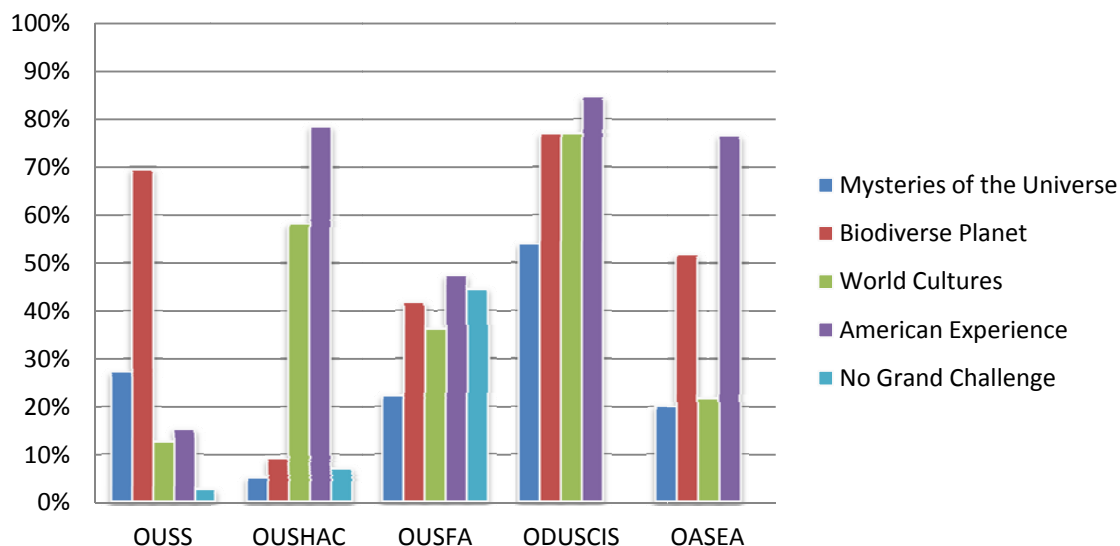
Not surprisingly, partnerships with an international partner were more likely to support “world cultures” than partnerships with a domestic partner (48% vs. 38%), and less likely to support “American experience” (23% vs. 64%). A greater percentage of international partnerships supported “biodiversity” (54% vs. 32%); there was equal support for “universe” (16%). (See Figure 6).

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<sup>14</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose one or more.

<sup>15</sup> 100% of the 168 Affiliate partnerships and 100% of the 218 SITES venue partnerships selected all four Grand Challenge areas.

**Figure 6: Percent of Partnerships Serving Grand Challenge Areas by Top-Level Divisions**



## Functional areas

[Partnerships reporting = 516]

Survey respondents were asked to select one or more of the functional areas that the partnership related to from the following list:

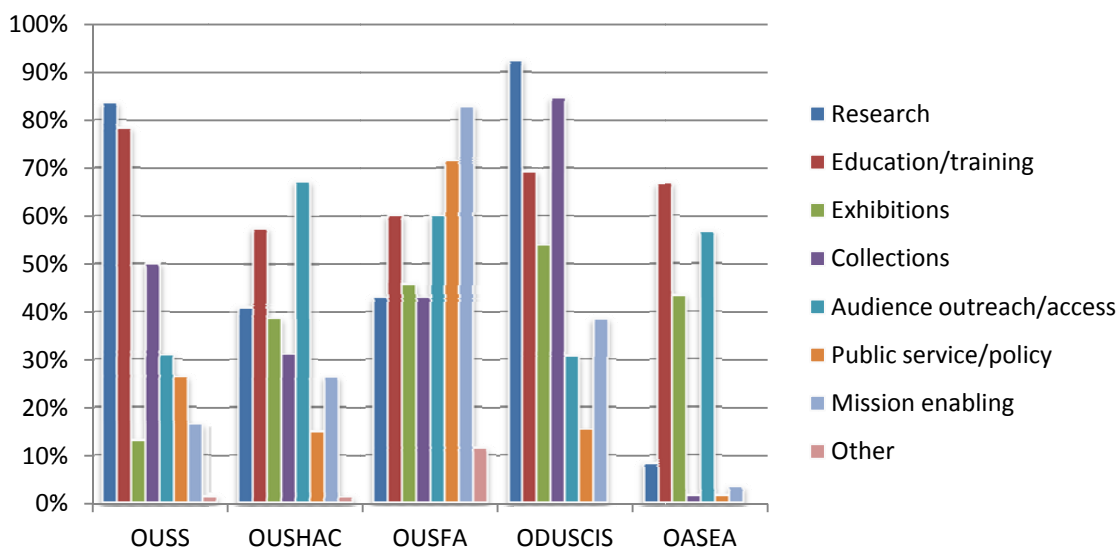
- Research
- Education/training
- Exhibitions
- Collections
- Audience outreach/access
- Public service/policy
- Mission enabling/organizational support
- Other (Please specify)
- None of the above functional areas

On average, respondents identified three functional areas that a partnership was involved in. One-quarter each (24%) selected one and two functions; one-fifth (21%) selected three functions; 13 percent said the partnership applied to four functional areas, eight percent to five, six percent to six, and three percent to seven.

Institution-wide, the top three most frequently selected functions were education/training (65%), audience outreach/access (54%), and research (51%). Around one-third of partnerships related to exhibitions (33%) and collections (36%), one-fourth to organizational support (25%), and one-fifth to public service/policy (20%).<sup>16</sup>

Understandably, emphases on most functional areas varied by division. For example, OUSS unit partnerships were more likely, and ASEA units less likely, to involve research (84% and 8%, respectively vs. 51% for all partnerships). DUSCIS units (e.g., Smithsonian Institution Archives and Smithsonian Institution Libraries) were more likely to have partnerships involving collections (85% vs. 36% for all partnerships). OUSS partnerships were less likely than others to involve exhibitions (13% vs. 33% for all partnerships). OUSFA partnerships more often involved public service/policy (71% vs. 20% for all partnership) and mission enabling/organizational support (83% vs. 25% for all partnerships). Other functions such as education/training and audience outreach/access were more equally distributed across the top level divisions. (See Figure 7).

**Figure 7: Percent of Partnerships Involving Functional Areas by Top-Level Divisions**



### Goals of partnerships

Respondents were asked to briefly describe the goal(s)/mutual benefits of the partnership. They were also asked to describe what each partner brings to the partnership (e.g., funding, skills/expertise, access to audiences, etc.) To provide a sense of what the partnerships are

<sup>16</sup> Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose one or more functional area.

meant to accomplish, Appendix H contains the partnership working titles, external and SI unit partner names, and key words derived from the open-ended responses to the survey questions regarding partnership goals/purpose.

### **Range of magnitude of partnerships**

The range of partnerships reported in the survey varied considerably. At one end were major unit operating partnerships where the Smithsonian unit involved would not be able to carry out its mission without its strategic partner. At the other end of the spectrum, partnerships were relatively small by all measures including size, scale, scope, and reach. Such partnerships were often time-bound collaborations on one-time projects, for example a public program or exhibition publication.

Several types of partnerships fell in the middle ground in terms of magnitude according to several indicators developed by the study team. Note that these types are subjective and not mutually exclusive, for example, a partnership that “involves multiple partners” could also likely be “national or international in scope.” Indicators of larger magnitude partnerships are:

- National or international in scope and/or effort
- Major ongoing strategic partnership at the unit level that expanded the accomplishment of its mission
- Involved a large number of external partners
- Pan-Institutional “umbrella” partnerships that were used across units and/or in multiple ways

Another indicator of the magnitude of a partnership is the amount of resources, human and non-human, devoted to it. The study team identified those partnerships that answered on the survey that they had some combination of high SI FTE contribution (checked “more than 5 to 10 FTE” or “more than 10 FTE”), high external partner FTEs, and high non-human resources (checked “\$1 million to \$5 million” or “greater than \$5 million”). Not surprisingly, many of these highly resourced partnerships are already examples under the other indicators of magnitude listed above (e.g., mission critical, geographic scope, number of partners, etc.). Again, it comes as no surprise that many of the most highly resourced partnerships are the major telescope and satellite space observation systems that SAO participates in, for example Giant Magellan Telescope (GMT), The Very Energetic Radiation Imaging Telescope Array System (VERITAS), Chandra X-ray Center, Submillimeter Array (SMA), and Multi-Mirror Telescope (MMT) at the Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory. Following are some examples of the different magnitude types. A more comprehensive list of examples is found in Appendix I.

**Examples of major unit operating partnerships:**

- **Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics** – Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory (SAO) and Harvard University

*To pursue studies of those basic physical processes that determine the nature and evolution of the universe.*

- **US National Academies** – National Science Resources Center (NSRC) and The National Academies

*To reform K-12 science education in the U.S.*

**Examples of partnerships that are national or international in scope and/or effort:**

- **Global Tiger Initiative** – National Zoological Park (NHP) and World Bank

*Because tiger populations are decreasing at unprecedented rates and urgent action is needed, the bank developed the Global Tiger Initiative and has partnered with NHP/SCBI to provide training to conservation professionals and foster the development and application of interdisciplinary principles of conservation biology.*

- **Haiti Cultural Recovery Project** – OUSHAC, Government of Haiti, La Fondation Connaissance et Liberté (FOKAL), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), U.S. Department of State, Clinton Foundation, President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (PCAH), Blue Shield, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), American Institute of Conservation, and International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM)

*To preserve Haiti's cultural heritage after the earthquake.*

**Examples of partnerships involving high numbers of external partners:**

- **Encyclopedia of Life** – National Museum of Natural History (NMNH) and 23 partners

*To develop a unified system for gaining access to all data related to species and the environment they inhabit. To aggregate, organize, manage and interpret these data. To create a single, comprehensive webpage for each species on earth.*

- **Museum on Main Street (MoMS)** – Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) and 39 partners

*Partner with state humanities councils to expand SI outreach to rural America*

**Examples of major strategic unit partnerships:**

- **SI-Mason Conservation Education Program** – NZP/Smithsonian Center for Conservation Biology (SCBI) and George Mason University

*Partnership with top rated SI scientists and experienced university faculty to create and maintain a program for course credit in conservation biology.*

- **Mobile Learning Institute** – SCEMS, Pearson, MacArthur Foundation, and Nokia

*Host digital media programs at the Smithsonian: workshops for young people; professional development for educators; and Summits for Educational Leaders. The goal of these offerings is to inform and train these audiences: 1) to use digital media to explore Smithsonian collections and exhibits, and 2) to create products they can share with others. These programs will be evaluated and the results will inform the development of permanent Centers for Innovation at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden and the National Postal Museum.*

**Examples of pan-Institutional “umbrella” partnerships:**

- **Smithsonian Queensland MOU** – Office of International Relations (OIR) and Government of Queensland, Australia

*To facilitate collaboration in mutual areas of research and other practice.*

- **Collaboration with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency** – NMNH and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

*Enhance working relationships related to research, development, publication, information and knowledge generation and dissemination, and public education and stewardship. NMNH has partnered with EPA on details and projects under the umbrella agreement.*

## **Part Six: Discussion**

The following are the study team’s observations and questions arising from review of the partnership and partner data collected in the partnership survey, and suggestions for improvement. The discussion also includes thoughts on the perpetuation of the partnership inventory going forward and the data collection process.

## Observations regarding the partnership and partner data results

- The study team was struck by the apparent silo-like behavior of the units with respect to joining forces and forging external partnerships. Even where partnerships involved multiple SI units, they were hard to distinguish since units did not use common partnership working titles, and did not always indicate if other SI units were involved. For example: OUSHAC reported the *Haiti Cultural Recovery Project* partnership with 13 external partners and nine SI unit partners, of which NMAI was not one. NMAI reported the *Haiti Cultural Recovery Center* partnership with three external partners and OUSHAC as its SI partner. In another example, what was seemingly the same partnership with the Pearson and MacArthur Foundations and Nokia was reported variously as *Mobile Learning Institute* (SCEMS), *ARTLAB+* (Hirshhorn) and *Teacher Leader Program/Innovation Center with Pearson Foundation* (NPM). Without further investigation the study team could not say if these two examples were the same partnerships or not. Internship programs with the same universities were also frequently reported by different units and it was unclear if these were separate partnership agreements or if they came under an institutional umbrella agreement.
  - Suggestion: It might be worthwhile to have a more coordinated approach to the registering of partnerships, especially the amorphous ones regarding interns and educational organizations. As with Development, where there is a central clearinghouse, there could be a similar function with partnerships, i.e., when one is about to be formed, it must be 'registered' so others don't independently approach the same partner without knowing who the potential partner is already working with and on what.
- More than half (57% or 294) of partnerships indicated that they did not seek assistance from any central Smithsonian office(s) or outside entity(ies) before and/or after entering into the partnership.
  - Questions to consider: Why is this so? Did they not need help? Did they not know what help was available or where to go for it? Did they feel it was not worth it?
- One-third (34%) of partnerships were informal. The level of formality was unclear in another 3% that indicated they were some combination of formal, informal, and "other."



- Questions to consider: Is that acceptable? What are the risks of informal partnerships? Is the Smithsonian incurring risk by having that level of informality in their collaborations?
- For the 329 partnerships reporting on type of written agreement, close to one-fifth (19%) said the formal written agreement was “other” than the standard choices given (e.g., MOU, MOA, grant, contract.)
  - Suggestion regarding the three bullets above having to do with formation of partnerships: In the interest of not “reinventing the wheel” the study team refers to *Improving Smithsonian Collaborations*, the 2009 study of internal and external collaboration done by the 11 inaugural SLDP members. The data results from the partnership survey corroborate what the SLDP team determined from interviews with SI staff – that when it comes to forming a partnership, there is no standard approach. There is no single central office or written directives and with each new partnership collaborators must “muddle through without guidance” (p. 16). In particular, the SLDP report notes that “the form of the agreement is often driven by who was asked to draft it (e.g., a lawyer in OGC versus a unit deputy director) and not by the content of the agreement itself” (p. 17). The SLDP team recommended establishing an Office of Smithsonian Collaborations or, at a minimum, a working group. It also developed some tools and checklists to use in the partnership formation stage that deserve revisiting. At this juncture, the advisability of such a new office and/or standard procedures for developing new partnerships could be addressed by the SI Redesign initiative.
- Smithsonian partnerships occurred most frequently with organization types that mirror to some extent the functions of the Institution – universities, non-profits, federal government agencies, and museums or similar organizations. Slightly fewer partnerships involved foreign government entities or American libraries and archives. Organization types that the Smithsonian partners with less frequently, defined as partnerships involving at least one of the type are 10 percent or fewer, are for-profit businesses, educational organizations below the university level (e.g., schools), professional associations, intergovernmental entities, and state, local, and tribal governments.
  - Questions to consider: Are there different partnering opportunities inherent in these “non-traditional” partners? Are there different costs, risks, etc. associated with these partners? Could the Smithsonian magnify its impact on critical issues facing the world by pairing its expertise with the distinctive resources and access that these “non-traditional” partners may offer?

- Suggestion: A study that would examine the costs and potential benefits of partnering with the organization types that are currently less frequent. Such a study would include case studies of SI and non-SI partnerships that currently exist with those types of organizations, and expand upon the 2008 Mapel report done for OUSS on partnerships with the corporate sector.

## **Observations regarding the perpetuation of the database**

- Use of the partnership inventory may not be critically important operationally (i.e. most directors are aware of the partnerships in the inventory for their units), but it may be important from a political or policy perspective. The answer rests largely on whether the findings that flow from this inventory add up to more effective partnerships.
  - Suggestion: OP&A should do a follow-up survey of the SI central administration and units in a year to find out if and how they used the inventory.
- From a cost/benefit perspective, the data are worth collecting every five years or so. Unless SI policy regarding partnerships changes radically, periodicity, similar to the data collection schedule for the All Museum Visitor Demographic Survey, would be sufficient and less cost prohibitive.
  - If data is needed more frequently, e.g., if the number of partnerships or number of external partners is a metric on the new SI Dashboard, or if the Regents Report started including a section on new partnerships and partners, another approach will be required for updating and maintaining the partnership inventory. One possibility is an EDGE-like database with routine data entry by units where certain staff persons have “rights” to enter data.
  - If partnership data were to be collected more frequently by one central unit, it would need a dedicated FTE to handle it.
  - If senior management wants accurate partnership and partner data, accountability for reporting the data would have to become institutionalized (e.g. become part of annual Smithsonian and unit goals and directors’ performance plans).
  - The partnership information collected and “cost” of data collection should be reviewed if perpetuation of the database goes forward. For example, the

study team did not ask respondents to include partner organization zip codes because it was felt that it would require additional research or “going to the filing cabinet” when the objective was to collect readily available information. However, it might be determined that the management utility or political capital gained from having additional partnership information (e.g., zip codes, more specific data on resource investments) is worth the extra staff time.

- Beyond the partnership formation stage (as addressed in the SLDP report), one challenge is to discover what partnerships are successful and why, whether they can be expanded, and whether they can provide some variant of lessons learned. Another challenge is to discover why some partnerships have not achieved what they were expected to accomplish. Did interest wane? Were resources adequate? Was too much red tape added to an endeavor already buried in red tape? Did irresolvable conflicts occur? Did the partnership become a time consuming burden? Did the partners lose a champion?
  - Suggestion: Further study is needed of best practices in managing and sustaining partnerships – what worked best (and what is to be avoided) in areas such as communication, planning, decision-making, managing risk, ethical concerns, accountability, and performance assessment. Case studies of a half dozen partnerships should be undertaken to answer these and other questions, thus strengthening the Smithsonian’s commitment to partnerships.