



Smithsonian Institution
Office of Exhibits Central

FY 2005—2009 Strategic Plan

November 8, 2004
(Based upon July 2004 SI Draft Performance Plan for FY06)

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Director's Message

On behalf of the senior management team of the Office of Exhibits Central, I invite you to read our Strategic Plan for 2005—2009. It is our first comprehensive update since the establishment of our first plan in 2002. We continue to emphasize our efforts to improve the services we offer to our customers and the Institution.

OEC provides comprehensive exhibition services to our customers throughout the Institution. In 2004, we provided services for projects, large and small, for the majority of the units of the Smithsonian. We provided extensive support to the National Museum of the American Indian for its inaugural exhibits at its opening in September 2004. In addition to our work internally, we assist, through advice and training, other federal agencies, schools, organizations, private individuals, and members of the museum committee, from the Washington metropolitan area to other countries and continents.

Our Strategic Plan links our work to the overall goals of the Smithsonian. It responds to external factors as well as our existing financial and human resources and includes indicators to measure how successful we are in achieving our goals.

This revised plan supports the changes we have made since 2002 and continues many of the efforts started over the past three years. We will continue to emphasize the specialized work that we do best in-house, outsource more repetitive, less challenging work, and collaborate on a much larger scale with our Smithsonian colleagues in other museums. We will increase our effectiveness in exhibition development, improve the exhibits we produce, and deploy our human and financial resources effectively.

I look forward to reporting on our accomplishments in meeting our strategies as well as our long-term objectives.

Mike Headley
Director
Office of Exhibits Central

Executive Summary

The *Office of Exhibits Central Strategic Plan FY 2005–2009* complies with the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993. It establishes the framework for a management system within OEC that:

- sets measurable objectives and strategies that support the Institution's goals and are in line with OEC's mission
- aligns activities and resources to accomplish intended results
- delineates where OEC will move in the coming years to be successful
- highlights external factors that affect OEC's organization and accomplishments

The Office of Exhibits Central supports three of the Institution's four goals that are applicable to our work as the Smithsonian's largest and most comprehensive exhibit producer: increased public engagement, enhanced management excellence and greater financial strength. This plan uses 2004 as its base year and encompasses the period, 2005–2009. It reflects external factors that affect OEC during this period, specific strategies to achieve our objectives, and measures designed to track our performance in achieving our goals. A summary of our objectives and strategies is contained in "Objectives at a Glance."

Over the next five years, the following strategic priorities will continue to emphasize OEC's efforts to meet and exceed our customer's needs:

Increase the amount of specialized work done in-house by OEC staff, taking advantage of our unique skills that are either not found or are more expensive in the private sector
Increase the amount of basic, repetitive work outsourced to private industry
Increase our collaboration with other SI exhibition units to share knowledge, experience, and costs to produce better exhibits for our customers
Improve the services offered to our customers by supporting them in negotiating with contractors for routine jobs, producing better exhibits by using OEC staff who hold specialized skills, and by incorporating customer feedback into our daily routine
Maintaining our project management capability to ensure a more coordinated, full service approach to exhibit production

Introduction

The Office of Exhibits Central supports three of the Institution's four goals that are applicable to our work:

- Increased public engagement
- Enhanced management excellence
- Greater financial strength

Each of our objectives directly supports the Institution's goals; we do not have any activities that deviate from his vision. Our long-term objectives are more general in nature but are achievable within five years. Our strategies are more specific and have specific indicators to help us measure our progress toward our long-term objectives.

Our strategies reflect our continuing emphasis on project management. This approach is critical to improving the services we offer our customers and in meeting our commitments to the Institution in achieving its goals.

Our objectives and strategies in support of Increased Public Engagement reflect our focus on outsourcing the routine, repetitive non-exhibit work to private contractors to allow staff with specialized experience to concentrate on exhibit projects that require unique skills. We will measure our progress by monitoring the percentage of in-house work that is devoted to unique exhibition services. This will accomplish two very important results: (1) OEC's customers will get better products because they will be done by either contractors or staff who are specialized in the particular customer's needs, and (2) OEC's staff will be better satisfied because they will be using their unique skills more often. Under this Smithsonian objective, we will also ensure the stewardship of the collections through meeting standards for their care, storage and security. We will ensure our staff has the knowledge and expertise appropriate to the exhibit services field.

Our focus on Enhanced Management Excellence will continue our efforts to balance the needs of our customers and employees and the needs of management both organizationally and Institutionally. We will ensure our cost reimbursement process is fair, reasonable and sound. We will measure our progress through feedback from our customers both inside and outside of OEC. We will ensure staff development, advancement and recognition and strengthen our administrative functions.

In support of Greater Financial Strength, we will continue to explore new ways to improve OEC's financial health by seeking new sources of revenue.

About OEC

The Office of Exhibits Central is the Smithsonian Institution's largest and most comprehensive exhibit producer. Experienced in permanent installations as well as traveling and temporary exhibitions, our staff provides Smithsonian clients with high-quality products and services, often at significantly lower cost than our commercial counterparts

Mission

The mission of the Office of Exhibits Central is to provide comprehensive exhibition services to the Smithsonian Institution and the larger museum community that result in compelling, high-quality, and cost-effective exhibitions that connect the American people to their history and cultural and scientific heritages.

Guiding Principles

To achieve this mission, the Office of Exhibits Central follows these principles:

- Excellent customer service with an emphasis on employee and customer involvement
- Collaborative partnerships with other SI organizations
- Employee development, continuous learning and diversity
- Management excellence
- Leadership in exhibit services

Vision

OEC is a state-of-the-art facility with staff skilled in all areas of the exhibition production process; a project portfolio recognized throughout the museum community for its creativity, craftsmanship, and value; and a reputation for customer satisfaction and for generously sharing our knowledge and experience.

The Organization

The Office of Exhibits Central is comprised of six primary units as described below and as shown on our organization chart.

The **Design and Editing Unit's** designers and editors collaborate with curators and other museum professionals to ensure that text, design, objects and visuals create a cohesive, informative presentation. Exhibit designers are responsible for all aspects of visual presentation, from gallery configuration and case design to text panels, banners, and other graphic elements. Editors write and edit exhibition scripts as well as collateral material such as brochures and web content.

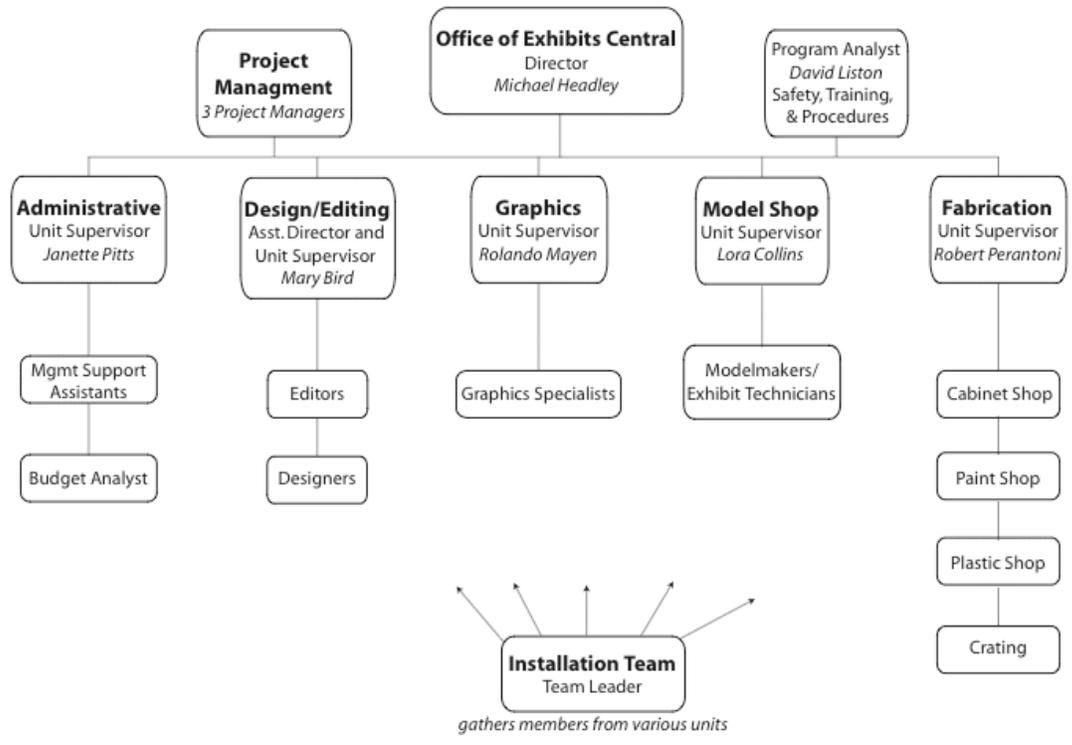
The **Graphics Unit** is responsible for digital output, silk-screening, photo lamination and mounting, archival matting and framing, exhibit refurbishment, hand lettering and mural installation.

The **Modelmaking Unit** creates scientifically and historically accurate dioramas, models and mannequins. Object handling and mount making, taxidermy, and lighting support round out the Modelmaking Unit's services.

The **Fabrication Unit** translates design intent into three-dimensional exhibitions. The unit's services encompass fine cabinetry and display casework, plastics work, finishing and packing and crating. The unit also oversees **Installation Teams**, which are created as necessary from members of the Design, Graphics, Fabrication, and Modelmaking Units.

The **Administrative Unit** provides general administrative support to OEC staff in the areas of human resources, budget formulation and execution, procurement, and office management. The Unit is also responsible for data collection and managing expenditures for exhibition projects and the cost reimbursement system.

The **Project Management Office** is responsible for the day-to-day management of all OEC projects. Each project manager is responsible for project oversight, from budget control and scheduling to resource management and stakeholder communication.



OEC Objectives at a Glance

Institutional Goal	Institutional Objective	OEC Objective	OEC Strategy	Measures
Increased Public Engagement	<p>Offer compelling first-class exhibitions and other public programs at Smithsonian museums, research centers and the National Zoo</p> <p>Improve the stewardship of the national collections for present and future generations</p>	<p>1.1 Provide quality exhibition design and production services to clients</p> <p>1.2 Ensure staff knowledge and expertise in state-of-the-art technology, techniques and advances in the exhibit services field, and upgrade equipment to support emerging trends</p>	<p>1.1.a Maintain OEC consultation and exhibit planning services</p> <p>1.1.b Focus in-house work devoted to expert exhibit services</p> <p>1.1.c Increase collaboration with SI units and non-SI organizations in exhibit planning and development</p> <p>1.1.d Expand and maintain facility space available to OEC staff and object preparation and processing</p> <p>1.1.e Maintain exhibition installation service</p> <p>1.1.f Maintain project management capability</p> <p>1.2.a Maintain staff hours devoted to learning new ideas and concepts, as funding allows, and implement cross-training initiatives</p> <p>1.2.b Modernize equipment based on funding and evaluation of existing needs</p>	<p>1.1.a Percentage of consultations and exhibition planning services</p> <p>1.1.b Percentage of in-house work devoted to expert exhibit services</p> <p>1.1.c Number of exhibitions developed in collaboration with other SI units</p> <p>1.1.d Number of initiatives undertaken to expand and maintain OEC space</p> <p>1.1.e Number of installations provided</p> <p>1.1.f Number of improvements made to project management process</p> <p>1.2.a Number of hours devoted to learning new ideas and concepts</p> <p>1.2.b Number of equipment and technology upgrades accomplished</p>

Institutional Goal	Institutional Objective	OEC Objective	OEC Strategy	Measures
Enhanced Management Excellence	<p>Strengthen an Institutional culture that is customer centered and results oriented</p> <p>Modernize the Institution's financial management systems and functions</p> <p>Modernize the Institution's information technology (IT) systems and infrastructure</p> <p>Ensure that the Smithsonian workforce is efficient, collaborative, committed and innovative</p> <p>Recruit, hire and retain a diverse workforce and promote equal opportunity in all aspects of the Smithsonian employment and business relationships</p>	<p>1.3 Ensure stewardship of SI collections</p> <p>2.1 Strengthen OEC's culture that is customer centered and results oriented</p> <p>2.2. Strengthen administrative management functions and decision making in human resources, budget execution and fiscal data management, and procurement</p>	<p>1.3.a Maintain access and security of OEC's Object Storage Facility</p> <p>2.1.a Provide leadership, establish sound working relationships and demonstrate good judgment in dealing with subordinates</p> <p>2.1.b Implement customer survey</p> <p>2.1.c Benchmark OEC functions against national and industry best practices</p> <p>2.1.d Ensure proper staff management, development, advancement and recognition that inspires commitment and productivity</p> <p>2.2.a Ensure compliance with Institutional financial management policies and procedures</p> <p>2.2.b Improve exhibit, design and billing processes to be more efficient and cost effective</p>	<p>1.3.a Percentage of applicable projects meeting any published guidelines and/or client standards for care, storage and security of the object(s)</p> <p>2.1.a Feedback from staff, supervisors, superiors and customers</p> <p>2.1.b Percentage of customers satisfied with OEC services</p> <p>2.1.c Number benchmarking initiatives undertaken</p> <p>2.1.d Number of developmental and advancement opportunities provided to staff; number of awards given to staff</p> <p>2.2.a Number of instances of non-compliance</p> <p>2.2.b Number of process improvements made</p>

Institutional Goal	Institutional Objective	OEC Objective	OEC Strategy	Measures
Greater Financial Strength	Secure the financial resources needed to carry out the Institution's mission	<p>2.2.c Ensure employee job satisfaction</p> <p>2.2.d Actively support the diversity goals of the Institution</p> <p>2.3 Enhance web site functionality</p> <p>3.1. Increase revenues from alternative sources for OEC operations</p>	<p>2.2.c Ensure employee job satisfaction</p> <p>2.2.d Actively support the diversity goals of the Institution</p> <p>2.3.a Expand and modernize the OEC website</p> <p>3.1.a Seek funding through grants, reimbursements or other sources</p>	<p>2.2.c Percentage of OEC employees who are satisfied with working at OEC on biennial employee survey</p> <p>2.2.d Percentage of underrepresented minorities and women in OEC workforce; percent of procurement contract dollars awarded to small, minority and women-owned and other under-utilized businesses</p> <p>2.3.a Number of changes and updates made to website</p> <p>3.1.a Dollar amount of revenues received from alternative sources</p>

OEC and the Smithsonian's Goals

Increased Public Engagement

Enlarge the Smithsonian's audiences, expand its degree of engagement with the public in Washington and throughout the country, and improve the quality of the Smithsonian impact on its audiences, both through its public programs and scientific research.

As the Smithsonian's most comprehensive exhibition producer, OEC's mission and vision are completely aligned with the Institution's goal of public engagement. The Office of Exhibits Central is dedicated to and has a long history of providing our Smithsonian clients with first-class exhibition design, editing, production and installation services. Each year OEC designs and produces over 100 projects, large and small, for literally every office and museum in the Smithsonian. The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) has been OEC's largest client since our inception in 1973. We are proud to be an integral part of their mission of "connecting the American people to their history and to their cultural and scientific heritages by increasing their opportunities to participate in Smithsonian programs and by expanding the Institution's presence across America."

In the 2005 – 2009 planning period, OEC will build on the well-established, collaborative relationships we have with other Smithsonian design and production units. OEC will also expand existing relationships and develop new ones with the other Smithsonian exhibit departments as well as our private partners. OEC will accomplish these expanded services and strengthened relationships through our Project Management Office.

OEC has three objectives that support the Institutional goal of increased public engagement:

- We will provide quality exhibition design and production services to our clients.
- We will ensure staff has the knowledge and expertise in state-of-the-art technology, techniques and advances in the exhibit services field, and upgrade equipment to support emerging trends.
- We will improve our exhibit process.

We will accomplish these objectives through strategies that focus on what we do best and outsourcing what others do better. We will adhere to established guidelines and client standards of excellence in the design and production of exhibitions, expand and maintain our facility, and maintain hours to provide for continuous staff learning and training.

OEC will work with the Office of the Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer as we bring together the many wonderful resources available both inside and outside the Smithsonian to:

- offer compelling, first-class exhibits
- expand the national outreach effort
- engage and inspire diverse audiences
- improve the stewardship of the national collections
- deliver the highest quality visitors' services in Smithsonian museums

Enhanced Management Excellence

Modernize Smithsonian management systems by bringing each of them to a level of quality and sophistication appropriate to an organization of the size and complexity of the Institution.

The Office of Exhibits Central's management excellence objectives and strategies support the Institution's goals by improving our management and organizational effectiveness. The FY 2005–2009 strategies measure standards related to overall SI policies, cost recovery and customer satisfaction.

OEC has three objectives that support the Institutional goal of enhanced management excellence:

- Strengthen OEC's culture that is customer centered and results oriented
- Strengthen administrative management functions and decision making in human resources, budget execution and fiscal data management, and procurement
- Enhance OEC's website functionality

We will accomplish these objectives through strategies that support the Smithsonian-wide performance plan and the diversity, well-being and professional development of our own staff.

We will continue our efforts to meet our employees' needs while balancing management's needs. As vacancies occur, we will work with the Office of Equal Employment and Minority Affairs and the Office of Human Resources to create a workforce and supplier base that mirrors the diversity of the United States population. We will ensure that we follow the Institution's financial management policies and improve our own internal business processes. We will work to ensure employee job satisfaction, based upon the results of the Institution's biennial employee surveys. We will implement our customer survey that was developed in our previous strategic plan and take actions to improve our processes based on the results. In addition, we will ensure our internal business processes, including exhibit, design and billing processes, are more efficient and cost effective.

Greater Financial Strength

Provide the financial support essential to achieving the Institution's goals.

The Office of Exhibit Central's budget receives funds primarily through federal appropriations, with some funds coming from institutional trust funds, restricted trust funds, and grants.

Original strategic plan contained a budget table, which has been deleted from this public document.

OEC has one objective that supports the Institutional goal of management excellence:

- Increase revenues from alternative sources for OEC operations

We will accomplish this objective through strategies that will continue to explore new ways to improve OEC's financial strength by seeking alternative funding sources.

External Factors

The following factors describe major trends and issues and their impact on OEC over the next two to five years:

Increased demand for services from other SI units — As financial constraints and competition for private resources continue, museums will continue to rely on OEC as a provider of high-quality, cost-effective, in-house exhibition services. These demands as well as changes in technology will require the expansion and upgrade of OEC's facilities as well as ongoing staff training and development and/or new hires.

New museum openings, such as the National Portrait Gallery and the National Museum of American Art, and exhibit upgrades at the National Zoo and the National Museum of American History, will create demands on OEC staff and resources.

Increased outsourcing — As demand for services outpaces our ability to provide them, OEC or the museums themselves will play a larger role in project management, jeopardizing the Institution's ability to provide consistent quality over exhibition design, development, and production.

Museums will continue to contract with design-build firms for exhibits but be unable to pay for portions of those exhibit requirements, resulting in more pressure on OEC to offer less expensive alternatives and to be able to manage that work.

Ongoing changes in computer hardware/software and other equipment used to design and produce exhibits, and technological advances in exhibit design and production, will continue to move at a rapid pace and there will be few resources available to replace outmoded technology and equipment in OEC or to train OEC staff in their use.

Increased pressure to incorporate technology into exhibitions will continue; the Institution's aggressive efforts to produce compelling, technologically appropriate exhibitions will tax OEC's ability to deliver timely, high-quality services.

Increased need to pursue outside sources of funding will continue; financial constraints within the Institution will prompt OEC to be creative in pursuing alternative sources of funding.

Increased administrative burdens placed on OEC, including PeopleSoft HR implementation, transportation and other decentralization initiatives, security, and FARSIGHT replacement, will lessen OEC's ability to meet basic needs in certain areas.