



C H O R A

THE QUICK START WORKSHOP: GET YOUR EXHIBITION OFF TO THE RIGHT START!

Exhibitions involve three intersecting developmental domains: setting—the physical space, case work, labels, photographs, carpeting, lights etc that constitute the hardware of the project; content—the story line, words, images, and concepts that carry the narrative direction and flow of the experience; and function—the purpose, central questions, communication and educational objectives for targeted audiences. There is a strong cultural bias and museological tradition to begin with content and setting, leaving functionality to be worked out by educators and docents after the exhibition opens. The museological standard for this traditional style exhibition is that the content be accurate, the story line cohesive, and the design elegant and engaging. The specific function of the exhibition is rarely articulated in the planning process or evaluated after the exhibition opens. While there has been a significant shift of late in the inclusion of formative and summative evaluation as a standard part of exhibition development, it is still conducted after story line and content have been determined and initial design complete.

The Quick Start Workshop turns this process on its head, making function the first consideration in the exhibition development process. At the end of the Quick Start process, clients receive a project Statement of Purpose (SOP). This document contains the prioritized central questions that the project will partially answer. It will also identify, in specific terms, the primary, secondary, and tertiary audiences for the project, as well as, measurable educational objectives for each of these audiences. Communication goals, or central messages, will also be articulated. In toto, the SOP will provide the guide for decision-making throughout the exhibition development process. At each submittal, from 20% design to 95%, the SOP will provide the clear criteria for deciding whether the content and design proposed will deliver the educational objectives and communication goals to the intended audiences.

The workshop is one day for most projects, with very large projects requiring several days. It engages 15-20 of the projects key stakeholders and stimulates early buy-in to the clear and measurable purpose for the project. As a time-tested methodology, the Quick Start Workshop has been used by the Chora principals to initiate hundreds of projects over the past two decades. The component activities are fun, interactive, painless, and generate all the data needed for Chora to complete an effective SOP for your project.



Seasoned design and curatorial teams who have participated in this process routinely comment that it accelerates the exhibition development program by six months in one day.

While best instituted at the inception of an exhibition project, a Quick Start Workshop can be equally useful for a project that has wandered down the content and design path and become lost or stuck due to a lack of mutual clarity about the precise function or purpose of their exhibition project. It is never too late to discover your purpose, and we would enjoy helping you find yours.

Chora is an educational consulting firm with over 35 years of experience in the education and museum business. We would love to think together with you about your exhibit projects.

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