

## Tips for IPOP Exhibition Development

### Step 4: Concept Development

#### Preparing material

The material used for this activity is a simple, direct statement of what the exhibition is. It can be as small as a paragraph or as large as a page. As far as possible it should describe the ideas behind the exhibition, the types of objects it will include, some of the people whose stories visitors will hear about in the exhibition, and the kinds of experiences that visitors can expect in the exhibition. One way to think of this is as the basic text that will be used to describe the exhibition on the website, or will be used in PR materials, or as the introductory text for the exhibition. Usually one starts with text only, but images can also be included, either in the first round or in subsequent rounds.

#### Interviewing

Interviewers can be team members or individuals from outside the team. What is most important is that interviewers understand what kind of interviewing this is. It is not about asking questions – it is about **listening**. Listening completely and absolutely. “Questions” are as open and non-leading as possible. “Follow-ups” are references to things the interviewee said that strike the interviewer as somehow not exactly the same as what the interviewer would have said in a similar situation. This unexpected element – whether subtle or obvious – is a clue to a different perspective. The point of the follow-up is to try to pin down this difference. Although it is better to do this without a script of any kind, beginners may need some help.

Here is one way to approach it:

- “Hello. I work for the museum and we’re talking to visitors today about a new exhibition we’re planning. Do you have a minute to talk with me?” [It’s best if there is a place to sit.] “Let’s sit here.”
- [if yes] “Here’s a statement of the exhibition. Please read it and then we’ll talk about it.”
- (Watch closely to see if there are any clues in the act of reading, e.g., sighs, chuckles, etc.) [Once the interviewee is finished...] “What about it?”
- “You said, ‘tk tk,’ can you tell me more about that?” [Repeat as needed.]
- “A while ago you mentioned ‘tk tk,’ can you say more about that?” [In cases where you can’t recall the exact words.]
- [When you don’t immediately know what to follow up with and there is silence between you, don’t be in a hurry to break the silence. It’s better if the interviewee breaks the silence. The place they go at that moment is a clue to what is really important to them. Wait until something naturally occurs to you, or go back to something you followed-up on earlier where you feel there might be more to be said.]
- [As the interview comes to a conclusion, the interviewer might want to get a sense of the interviewee’s experience preference. One way to do this is to try to identify what

has made a strong impression on the interviewee, either on this visit or a previous one or at a different museum.] “What’s been the high point of your visit here so far?” or “Is there an experience from a previous visit here that stands out in your memory?”  
[Follow up as usual with details that strike you.] “Can you say more about ‘tk tk’?”

Interviews can take place anywhere in the museum. Teams should disperse to maximize coverage. The interviewer should select for interviewing anyone s/he pleases. Because each interviewer is selecting for different reasons (conscious or unconscious), there is likely to be a range of interviewees. Interviews can be as short as a few minutes or as long as the entire time available. They will tend to be longer when interviewees are both articulate and have perspectives that are unusual/different.

### **Note-taking**

Because the interviewer is totally focused on listening, s/he might not recall everything that is said. It’s the job of the note-taker to record points that the interviewer followed up on, as well as any other points that the note-taker feels are not what s/he expected. Under no conditions should the note-taker say anything during the interview. Having a second person asking questions makes the work of the interviewer much more difficult. Interviewers should interview. Note-takers should take notes.

### **Creative Discussion**

The second half of the concept-development meeting is taken up with discussion. Note-takers report on the key points that were different (in small or large ways) from what they and the interviewers noted. Interviewers can add or clarify what they heard, since the note-taker’s report will help them recall the interview. If some of these points strike the team as especially interesting, they will be a starting point for considering how the statement/plan might be revised or enriched.

At the conclusion of the discussion the team decides whether or not there is a need to revise the statement and do this activity again. Usually it takes at least two rounds to arrive at the best possible statement and plan.

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