



Visitor Studies Association

Board of Directors Meeting
Albuquerque, NM
July 16, 2014
MINUTES

Present

- President and Chair..... Joe Heimlich
Past President..... Dale McCreedy
President Elect..... Kim Kiehl
Treasurer..... Sarah Cohn
Secretary..... Randy Roberts
Vice-President, Organizational Development.....Dave Ucko
Vice-President, Professional Development..... Jessica Luke
Association Manager..... Eli Bossin

Members:

Marcie Benne, Kate Haley Goldman, Elisa Israel, Randi Korn, Camellia Sanford, Gina Svarovsky, Saul Rockman

Absent :

Bob Breck, Laura Huerta-Migus

Call to Order

The regular meeting of the Board of the Visitor Studies Association, the President being in the Chair and the Secretary being present, was called to order at 8:35 Mountain time.

Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Table with 2 columns: Name, Conflict. Rows include Marcie Benne (None), Eli Bossin (None), Bob Breck (Absent), Sarah Cohn (BISE contract), Kate Haley-Goldman (None), and Joe Heimlich (None).

Laura Huerta Migus	Absent
Elisa Israel	None
Kim Kiehl	None
Randi Korn	None
Jessica Luke	None
Dale McCreedy	None
Randy Roberts	None
Saul Rockman	None
Camellia Sanford	None
Gina Svarovsky	None
Dave Ucko	None

Approval of Consent Agenda

R. Roberts confirmed that the following items were part of the consent agenda.

- President Report (J. Heimlich)
- Incoming President Report (Kim Kiehl)
- Association Manager Report (E. Bossin)
- Communication Committee Report (G. Svarovsky)
- Development Committee Report (R. Korn)
- Membership Committee Report (M. Benne)
- Professional Development Committee Report (E. Israel)

J. Heimlich asked if anyone wanted to move any items from the consent agenda to the deliberative agenda for any reason. No changes were indentified.

Motion: D. Ucko moved *“That the Consent Agenda be accepted.”* D. McCreedy seconded. The consent agenda was approved.

Deliberative agenda

1. Approval of the Minutes of the Board Meeting of May 21-22, 2014

R. Roberts asked if there were any corrections to the minutes of the May 21-22 Board meeting. No changes were offered.

Motion: J. Luke moved *“That the minutes of the May 21 – 22 Board meeting be accepted.”* K. Kiehl seconded. The minutes were approved.

2. Around the table – Committee Highlights

- Conference Planning Committee (C. Sanford): Planning next conference has begun. The committee is considering changing dates, which will be discussed later.
- Finance Committee (K. Haley-Goldman): Sarah Lee has agreed to join Finance Committee. A meeting will be scheduled soon.
- Membership Committee (M. Benne): RFQ has been prepared for help with developing a member recruitment and promotion plan.

- Communication Committee (G. Svarovsky): Committee is working on Communication plan; the E-News team is looking at reduced frequency to make manageable and more potent.
- Partnerships (S. Rockman): putting together database of other organizations for VSA to explore for partnerships.
- Development Committee (R. Korn): Has been looking for ways to be creative with fundraising and bring in higher value gifts; Survey Gizmo has donated a high end version to raffle off at the conference this year. There will be 50 tickets available @ \$40/ticket. Board members are asked to sell raffle tickets.
- Professional Development (Elisa Israel): There is a great slate of conference workshops underway and enrollment has been strong; committee is working on introducing webinars and will be partnering with ASTC on these efforts; other ideas being pursued include web discussion groups (like webinar but more casual); there are many exciting opportunities that will be happening this year.
- VP Organizational Development (D. Ucko): Thinking bigger picture is important focus for this year; will start today with Board strategy discussion.
- VP Professional Development (J. Luke): Conference Planning Committee and Professional Development Committee are engaged in big picture thinking; as an organization we're being approached more about bigger picture activities. One such activity to consider has been brought forward by Barbara Butler and Larry Bell who are reviving a previous initiative around competencies and certification (which they'll present as a conference session); also NAEA contacted VSA about participating in their annual research symposium.

3. Status Updates (Eli Bossin)

Website – Cuberis is still working on website layout and navigation with E. Bossin and S. Cohn; the site should be ready to go public late summer/early fall 2014. E. Bossin has been using the new database portion and M. Benne is heading up the new member page appearance.

K. Haley-Goldman recommended that prior to launch, we develop a governance document about who manages/who is responsible for each aspect of the site maintenance. S. Cohn will pursue development of the document with Cuberis, but it may not be in their scope of work. Once the site is ready and before it goes public there will be a beta test period. S. Rockman suggested asking non-VSA colleagues to do a think aloud with us to help identify issues.

When the site is closer to being ready, E. Bossin and S. Cohn will provide update to Board.

Conference

E. Bossin reported on registrations for workshops, conference, and events. He noted that we were able to arrange for alcohol to be served at events in spite of the notice in the program that alcohol would not be served at events. There was a discussion about whether or not to ask for donations to help underwrite cost of alcohol since VSA has to provide, but Board decided that it was not necessary.

Membership

Membership is at 414. Basic memberships are dropping off and most who were basic are moving to full memberships.

4. Review of budget/actuals to date and update on 990s (Sara Cohn)

S. Cohn reviewed the challenges of the past year including new roles for treasurer, association manager, finance committee, and working with accountants. She has been able to identify holes and gaps in our processes and procedures so we have the information to be fiscally responsible, but the Association has some work to do to put processes and policies in place. She did note, however, that the Association is fiscally sound.

S. Cohn led the Board through budgeted income/expenses and current financial reports. She noted that conference revenue and expenses were not all accounted for at this time in the calendar year so it is a bit difficult to have a true picture. She mentioned that there was significant revenue that has been received, but is not yet showing in the reports because it has not been deposited. This amounts to approximately \$30,000. The Board expressed concern about this since the funds are not drawing interest and the checks will be safer once deposited.

J. Luke suggested that the Finance Committee review procedures for depositing checks received and bring a policy/procedure recommendation back by the next Board Meeting. In the interest of addressing the immediate issues, the Finance Committee was charged with implementing immediate changes if called for and notifying the Board of those changes.

BISE finances: S. Cohn reported that she is working with University of Pittsburgh on ensuring that finances are in order. VSA has been paid in full for all contracted work and needs to go back for additional contract.

990 Forms: The 990s are past due and we have requested an extension. This is part of the accountant's work for VSA and has not been completed yet. S. Cohn is working with them to get 990s completed. She reminded Board Members to send her volunteer hours for 2013 as she needs this for the 990 form. Previous year's 990s are in the Finance section of Basecamp if Board members need to see the format and how this information is presented. Once the 990 is complete it needs to be accessible for a period before being submitted. Since it is late, quick turn around of review will be needed.

There was discussion about whether or not there were problems with the accountants and it was agreed that VSA needs to have a better handle on its processes before assessing the accountants. Once the Finance Committee is up and running and better processes are in place, VSA should look at turn around time and other possible concerns.

J. Luke suggested that the EC carefully review the finances at our next meeting since we don't have all the info in front of us just now.

5. BISE Update (S. Cohn)

VSA contracted with three authors to do synthesis reports focused on a particular area using the informalscience.org database. The original intent was to publish the reports, but that did not happen for a variety of reasons ranging from quality of the pieces to the time involved in preparing them for publication. It was also found that the reports available in the database were limited so the synthesis was not necessarily reflective of the field. Now the authors are developing white papers to be provided on-line to VSA members and others. Also, BISE is doing blog posts to informalscience.org.

Amy Grack Nelson at Science Museum of Minnesota is finalizing the package and will be debuting at the conference on Friday morning.

University of Pittsburgh is looking into creating a framework of questions that can be used at science museums to assess family learning; there is a question as to how VSA will be part of that.

Discussion of particulars of this project resulted in the following decision:

It is important for VSA to clearly understand and articulate how the Association is handling this project moving forward. What remains to be accomplished? What are VSA's tasks? Who is responsible? Although this project has been changing throughout its course, VSA needs to be clear on its involvement.

a. J. Heimlich charged the Finance Committee with reviewing and overseeing the financial aspects of the grant. The Finance Committee will provide status updates to the EC and Board on grant finances. (This especially important since S. Cohn is contractor on the grant and is VSA Treasurer).

b. S. Cohn will continue to provide status updates to EC and Board on grant activities. The EC will serve as a "thought partner" regarding VSA involvement and future planning.

c. BISE Update will be on every EC and Board agenda moving forward through end of grant period

6. Grant strategy and management

Grants can enable VSA to expand its impact and possibly to expand its staffing and resources. There are a number of strategic and operational questions that need to be addressed to move forward:

- Should staff be managing grants?
- What kinds of grants are important for VSA to participate in?
- How do we balance responding to invitations and proactively pursuing grant opportunities?
- How do other associations do it?
- Is VSA in a financial position that enables us to hire a grant person with the understanding that grants can fund staff?

Discussion about what kind of grants VSA should pursue:

- Related to advancing an organizational strategy
- Supporting and/or building on work we've already done (like competencies)
- Conference funding (dissemination)
- Institutional level capacity building
- Pushing methodologies/Open source instruments
- Convening (practitioners and researchers/organizations); other ways to bring these folks together
- Building infrastructure around research agendas
- Mini-grants/incubator grants for partnerships
- Opportunities that support moving Informal learning to be more evidence based

- Opportunities that enable VSA to be a better home for research
- Translator between industries/bring our strength to target audiences
- VSA branded commissioned papers

Grant conversation needs to be continued at EC and Board levels.

7. Policy on Board Engagement: Expectations/Process for addressing

VSA by-laws refer to Board non-performance and it was determined that a more specific definition of non-performance would be useful and critical to being able to implement non-performance guidelines if necessary. Outcome of discussion was the following suggested guidelines to define non-performance:

- A pattern of non-engagement
- Unexcused absences at 50% of meetings [annually]
- Not fulfilling duties of assigned Board role: i.e. VP not communicating with assigned committees; Committee Chair not holding meetings; secretary not preparing meeting minutes, etc.

J. Heimlich suggested that we move forward at this point and return to this discussion later.

8. Conference timing: Proposed change of date (factors to consider)

C. Sanford presented a proposal from the Conference Planning Committee to change the dates of the 2017 VSA Conference from mid-July to late September. The purpose of the change is to accommodate member preference, lower conference expenses, and increase attendance.

In their proposal document, the CPC provided an overview of benefits and considerations/organizational implications, which C. Sanford reviewed. (Document posted to Basecamp). C. Sanford asked the Board if there were other factors that the committee should consider before recommending the shift.

Discussion

- Survey responses from prior VSA conferences suggesting that September does not interfere with other conferences does not provide a full range of information about potential competition from conferences that are attended by new audiences that VSA is hoping to develop. It's important to look broadly at potential participants as well as our current participant group. Survey members, not just conference participants.
- There are conflicts in almost every month so this is something that just needs to be understood and dealt with.
- January is another possibility, but winter travel is difficult and timing conflicts with NSF deadlines.
- Suggestion for membership to be involved in the discussion since they're thinking about developing new audiences.
- It would be useful to clarify what the Conference Committee hopes will be the result of shifting the date. More people? Different people? Other?
- Summer is the busiest time of year for visitation, so does it make sense to pull people away at this season?
- There is an opportunity to attract more practitioners; there is a risk to lose academics

Next Steps

- Membership committee will add conference timing question to membership survey they're planning
- C. Sanford will take discussion back to committee for further consideration of next steps

9. Conference marketing

The Conference Planning Committee has raised the need to be more strategic in marketing the conference. Currently, marketing is handled in an ad hoc way with volunteers distributing material in a way that is not strategically targeting audiences. Camellia brought up the need to think about this across committees. She will work on pursuing conversation with Professional Development Committee, Communications, Membership, and Development.

10. Framework: Review and discussion

Kim Kiehl has been charged with looking at developing a three-year plan to guide the overarching strategic direction of VSA and coordinate the work of Committees. She put together a framework document as a starting place for developing a comprehensive and cross-organizational strategy. The document is based on a number of existing VSA strategy documents.

Kim clarified that this will be an iterative process and will begin with Board discussion and small group work responding to the framework, specifically assessing and suggesting goals and tactics.

Board discussion focused on a range of questions and suggestions:

- There seems to be a lack of alignment between the goals and the tasks, which is easier to see with a document pulling everything into one place.
- Also need to prioritize and sequence since not all goals and tactics are equal. (Part of the work that needs to start happening today).
- Need to assess whether or not current tactics are best ways to achieve goals. May need to rethink tactics.
- J. Heimlich has provided committee charges, but is willing to engage in dialogue about the charges. Committees should review charges and offer recommended changes if desired.
- In other iterations, audience document suggested prioritization of audiences. This looks like all audiences are equal. Suggestion to put back prioritized diagram.
- Suggestion to include a bullet point in the Who are We section about diversifying the people who do this work. Further explore what we mean by "diversity"/"diversifying" our membership. Suggestion that an indicator of VSA success would be that the organization is a diverse, sustainable organization – maybe that's our primary priority, that's our number one bullet under "What it means to be successful"

The Board further reviewed and discussed the key bullets (outcomes/objectives/identity statements). K. Kiehl will integrate all input into the next iteration for further discussion.

J. Heimlich broke up the Board into small groups of committee chairs with "thought partners"

to move forward committee plans that aligned with and advanced the overarching direction. Task was to review goals and activities and refine based on committee perspectives. This work will be carried forward through the Committee Chairs conference call meetings as a way to focus cross committee work and ensure that the work of committees is aligned around advancing a shared direction.

K. Kiehl asked that notes from small group meetings be submitted to her so she can continue to build the framework as a living document that is shaped by and shapes the work of the association. She'll integrate the board feedback and small group work and send the document back out to the Board.

11. Wrap Up

J. Heimlich noted that E. Bossin's contract is up for renewal this summer. He will be reviewing E. Bossin's performance and will be reaching out for feedback.

J. Heimlich reviewed agenda for Annual Business Meeting and asked each committee chair to do a very brief report. Other agenda items include regular business (minutes, treasurer's report), and State of the Association report from the President.

J. Heimlich thanked everyone for their attention during a day of very intense and important discussions and their hard work throughout the year.

12. Meeting adjourns

R. Roberts moved "*That the Board Meeting be adjourned.*" S. Rockman seconded. The motion carried.

The meeting adjourned at 4:32 pm Mountain

Randy C. Roberts
Secretary
August 5, 2014