

**Minutes of the Visitor Studies Association
Board of Directors Meeting
July 28, 2010 8:30am – 4:30pm (MST)
Maricopa Board Room, Wyndham Phoenix Hotel, Phoenix, Arizona**

Present

President and Chair	Kirsten Ellenbogen
President-elect	Dale McCreedy
Vice-President, Organizational Development	Rita Deedrick
Vice-President, Outreach Development	Matt Sikora
Vice-President, Professional Development	Kris Morrissey
Treasurer	Julie I. Johnson
Secretary	Karen Graham
Past President	Kathleen McLean

Members

Rick Bonney, Dorothy Chen-Courtin, Cecilia Garibay, Leslie Hartog, Joe Heimlich, Elisa Israel, Cheryl Kessler, Karen Knutson, Ellen McCallie, Caren Oberg, Saul Rockman, Jessica Sickler, Carey Tisdal, Robert, "Mac" West.

Absent: Randi Korn

Association Executive Director	Eric Ledbetter
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Guests

Co-Principal Investigator CASE Project	Alan Friedman
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1) 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 8:40 a.m.

2.) Conflict of Interest Disclosure roll call

K. Graham asked if Board Members had any conflict of interest to disclose about any items on the agenda and then conducted a Conflict of Interest roll call of all Board members present. Yearly disclosure forms were distributed, signed and returned to the Executive Director.

Name	Conflict?	Nature of Conflict
Rick Bonney	no	
Dorothy Chen-Courtin	no	
Rita Deedrick	no	
Kirsten Ellenbogen	yes	Co-Principal Investigator on National Science Foundation (NSF) Building Informal Science Education (ISE) Grant
Cecilia Garibay	no	
Karen Graham	no	
Leslie Hartog	no	
Joe Heimlich	no	
Elisa Israel	no	
Julie I. Johnson,	yes	CAISE
Cheryl Kessler	no	
Karen Knutson	yes	Associate Director of UPCLOSE, PI on ISE and CAISE
Randi Korn	absent	
Ellen McCallie	yes	CAISE
Dale McCreedy	no	
Kathleen McLean	no	
Kris Morrissey	no	
Caren Oberg	no	
Saul Rockman	no	
Jessica Sickler	no	
Matt Sikora	no	
Carey Tisdal	no	
Robert "Mac" West	no	

3). Approval of Consent Agenda

K. Graham asked for confirmation that the following items were part of the consent agenda.

- 1) President's Report (K. Ellenbogen)
- 2) President Elect's Report (D. McCreedy)
- 3) Secretary's Report (C. Tisdal)
- 4) VP for Outreach Development Report (M. Sikora)
- 5) VP for Organizational Development Report (R. Deedrick)
- 6) Executive Director's Report (E. Ledbetter)
- 7) Board Development Committee Report (C. Garibay)
- 8) Membership Committee Report (L. Hartog)
- 9) Professional Development Committee (C. Kessler)
- 10) Publications Committee (K. Knutson)
- 11) Resource Development Committee (R. West, C. Oberg)
- 12) Conference Planning Committee (J. Sickler)

Professional Development Report was moved from the consent agenda to the Deliberative agenda.

J. Heimlich moved that the consent agenda be accepted as modified, J. Johnson seconded. The motion was adopted.

Deliberative agenda

Previous Board Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the March 2-3, 2010 held in Washington D.C had been posted on Basecamp prior to the meeting. R. Deedrick moved that the minutes be approved as corrected K. Mclean seconded. Motion carried.

Overview of VSA directions and activities for the day, the week, and the next year

K. Ellenbogen provided a review of what would take place during the meeting and during the week of the Conference. She outlined some of the important activities that would be taking place over the next year. She stated that she was confident that there would be fruitful conversations that would take place at the Conference. She stated her hope that Board members would welcome important guests as well as long-term members who come year after year and she encouraged Board Members to persuade people at the conference to join VSA committees. She underlined that the Executive Director will be a wonderful asset in helping move the Board move forward.

VSA budget and financial report

The Treasurer, J. Johnson, explained the report she posted on Basecamp. She noted that many of the expenses will occur during the current week and projections were made based on current spending levels and where we could be if we do everything we hope to do. Revenue and expenses are very close and she emphasized that we need to think about how we bring resources to the Association.

There was discussion about the fact that there was a lower participation rate from the local audience in the workshops then there has been in past years thus contributing a to shortfall in anticipated revenue from the workshops. She suggested that local host committees should be made aware of their responsibility to recruit from the local communities.

C. Oberg inquired if the note about sponsorship being below projections reflected the actual cash received or cash plus pledges. J. Johnson clarified that this line only accounts for cash received and that in the future she would like to be made aware of the pledges which she will account for as a liability until the cash is received.

C. Oberg asked for clarification on revenue and expenses and whether or not the VSA will end up in a deficit position. J. Johnson confirmed that the Board approved a deficit budget for this fiscal year, however, expenses are being spent at less than the projected rate, if this trend continues, and revenue does not decrease from projections, then the Association will end the year just above break-even. However, if spending goes up and revenue is lower than forecast, we will have a deficit. E Ledbetter stated that it is likely that expenses will be above forecast due to spending delays caused by ED transition.

J. Johnson presented the VSA July budget report as on July 17th. She explained the categories of revenues and their percentages as well as the categories of expenses and percentages. She presented and explained VSA's revenue and expenses by accounts.

C. Oberg inquired as to how we compare to other similar organizations in terms of revenue. J. Johnson replied that presently VSA has two big categories of spending "programs" and "general operations" and does not include "fundraising" because our fundraising is done by volunteers. We do not track any costs related to fundraising but this will be a note to the financial statements. K. McLean stated that all the programs are done by the services of the volunteer board. Johnson stated that it is important when we discuss the budget to remind people of this.

C. Tisdal inquired if it was possible to track costs and revenues of all workshops. J. Johnson stated that through a line item in the budget we do track regional workshops, however, it is difficult to track pre-conference workshops due to breaking out costs for rooms at the conference however; it is possible to do and is something to think about going forward.

C. Garibay spoke about the difficulty of recruiting a new Treasurer due to the fact that this position requires a lot of bookkeeping. The Board Development Committee recommended that the bookkeeping function be removed from the responsibilities of the Treasurer and that a bookkeeper be hired, possibly attached to the VSA office. J. Johnson estimated the costs to be approximately 2.5K including the purchase of bookkeeping software. Costs will be incurred next fiscal year. This decision will be made by the Executive Committee. J. Johnson reminded the group that the typical process is for a new treasurer to be identified by the summer board meeting so that the individual can shadow the outgoing treasurer until the end of the calendar year. The official transition occurs January due to our fiscal year.

J. Johnson referred to the report that she had sent out to members which discussed the rationale for moving the April award account from a CD to a money market account. The Treasurer moved "that the entire amount of the funds in the "April Award" certificate of

deposit (CD) be transferred into a small business money market account at our current bank". R. Deedrick seconded the motion. The motion carried.

New VSA Policy on Fiduciary Responsibility and the Budget

E. Ledbetter briefed Board members on the new VSA policy on Fiduciary Responsibility that was approved by the Executive Committee at its May, 2010 regular meeting. This policy formalizes procedures for monitoring and communicating expenses and revenues that meet or exceed 20% of a budget line item particularly when expenses and revenues fall into two different responsibility areas and will have an impact on net revenue.

Announcement of a new project, funded by the National Science Foundation.

K. Ellenbogen and E. Ledbetter announced a new National Science Foundation (NSF) funded project relating to Building Informal Science Education (ISE). Despite being from the NSF it is hoped that the VSA can apply for a grant that will focus on building informal learning environments which means that it projects can be broadened from specifically science to the broader category of informal learning environments. VSA is particularly strong in this area and NSF is interested in cross-disciplinary impact importance of trying to broaden. The more we can do to say there is a world of informal learning outside of museums. NSF itself is interested in broadening their idea of science vs other things. NSF is interested in thinking across environments and the intersection across interdisciplinary areas VSA won't be limited to just science based projects. The Principal Investigator (PI) for VSA is will be E. Ledbetter.

Suggestions for projects for the grant are:

1. Be a national network by gathering evaluation reports and building on work that is going on in other Associations (American Evaluation Association);
2. Focus on a database of evaluators which will be a resource for funders
3. Synthesis reporting

K. Knutsen felt that this would be an interesting opportunity to get reports from non-science areas into the database. R. Bonny commented on the inconsistently quality of reports on informal.science.org and suggested that guidelines could be developed for reports that would essentially impose criteria that would result in improved quality. Discussion followed on certification of evaluators and past work that was done with a previous NSF Grant. K. Ellenbogen said that she would check past files and post the work that was done previously by VSA on certification of evaluators. S. Rockman questioned if VSA was the best vehicle to identify quality evaluators as the American Evaluation Association has already done this. K. Ellenbogen said that NSF wanted to involve VSA because it sees VSA as being able to provide the linkage with AEA. She mentioned further that NSA had encouraged VSA to ask for additional funding to solidify the linkages between VSA and AEA. E. Israel wondered about how CARE, who already has a list of recommended evaluators, may be involved. K. Ellenbogen pointed out that the leadership of CARE was already aware of this development with the NSF grant and there are monthly meeting with the leadership of CARE and VSA. E. Ledbetter mentioned that in addition to the leadership ties with CARE and AEA there will also be staff ties that he brings to the table. He called to everyone's attention that VSA has committed to striking an oversight task force from VSA Board members. J. Johnson felt it was important to think strategically about activities that may be outside of the scope of the

grant but that would support the grant such as regional workshops to critique evaluation reports. K. Knutsen reminded everyone that VSA needs to write a communications plan around this project. K. Ellenbogen confirmed that the final VSA proposal would be developed by the oversight committee would go to the entire Board for approval through Basecamp. K. Ellenbogen encouraged members to generate ideas and bring them forward to the oversight committee which would be discussed at the next EC meeting. K. Ellenbogen noted the similarities with CAISE grant and committed to uploading the full grant NSF and CAISE grants to Basecamp for people to review.

Report of Operations Planning Working Group

E. Ledbetter updated members on the progress made by the Operations Working Group who were tasked with producing an operations plan based on the VSA Strategic Plan. E. Ledbetter asked Board Members to review the table of PROPOSED 2011 VSA OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES BY AUDIENCE and provide feedback on the following questions:

- determine if we need to add some additional strategies; and
- determine if any strategies should be dropped.

E. Ledbetter will update the table based on the discussion.

Setting of date for December 2010 Board Meeting.

K. Ellenbogen reviewed some of the issues with setting a date for the next Board meeting. After discussion it was decided that the next two meetings would be virtual meetings and that there would be one meeting in mid-September for fundraising training and the next full board meeting to be the week of December 13th, 2010. The focus of the December meeting will be to approve the 2011 VSA and budget and update the Operations Plan. K. Graham will send out a Doodle poll and announce the dates for these two meetings by mid August.

Small Planning Groups

K. Ellenbogen introduced the groups and stated that each group was to think about creating a charge and/or scope of work for a possible task force that would deal with each of the topics below.

Board Members were divided into three working groups to address the following areas in VSA that are deemed critical to implementing the VSA Operations Plan:

- Possible changes in VSA fundraising approach and the relationship between fundraising and the board.(Facilitator K. McLean, R. Korn, E. McCallie, C. Oberg, J. Sickler, R.M. West)
- Possible changes to VSA publications process and member outreach (Facilitator K. Ellenbogen, L. Hartog, C Kessler, K. Knutson, D. McCreedy, K. Morrissey, M. Sikora)
- Possible changes to Bylaws and VSA governance (Facilitator R. Deedrick, C. Garibay, K. Graham, J. Heimlich, E. Israel, J. Johnson, S. Rockman, C. Tisdal)

Small Groups Report Out

Each group reported the following results of the above exercise:

- VSA fundraising approach and the relationship between fundraising and the board.
CHARGE: In order to shift from “fundraising” to a “development” organizational paradigm we will change the nature of how we do fundraising. A task force will be pulled together that will:

- Review the literature
 - Review Strategic Task Force recommendations
 - Clarify categories
 - Recommend an operational structure
 - Align values, objectives, impact (CAISE statements)
 - Add to list of issues
- VSA publications process and member outreach
This group did not recommend a task force but felt that there was room for improvement in VSA outreach particularly in the use of new media. To address some identified problems it recommended that a new VSA committee be formed that would include both the existing Publications Committee and the Marketing and Public Relations Resource Group. They suggested using the VSA Conference Committee model where there are sub-committees that address various issues/tasks. M. Sikora will review the notes and present more detailed recommendations to the EC in the near future.
- Bylaws and VSA governance. The working group recommended that two task forces be struck with the following charges;
- (Governance): Review and make recommendations to the Executive Committee on a proposed governance structure for VSA in light of current practice, needs and by-laws changes. The task force will need to make use of data/input from a variety of individuals including committee chairs/vice chairs, members and others.
 - (Bylaws): Review the current by-laws and make necessary revisions in consultation with legal counsel. Articulate the implications of operating under the revisions. This work is to be completed by Nov 30, 2010.

Detailed notes for each of these groups were supplied to the Executive Director's office.

16 Board Development Committee brief of nominations process – review and preview

C. Garibay reported on recent deliberations by the BDC on upcoming VSA elections. Issues for improvement are:

- timing
- process
- engaging the membership
- involving existing Board members in succession planning by identifying other members for Board service who have skills that the Board needs and are consistent with the Operations Plan

17. CAISE (Center for Informal Science Education) REPORT

The President introduced the guest speaker, Alan Friedman, Past President VSA and Co-Principal Investigator who represents VSA on the CAISE project who gave an update on the partnership that VSA has with CAISE. He mentioned that J. Johnson is also involved in this project. He described the past history of the grant that began in January 2006. He mentioned that the grant had undergone continuous reconsideration. In April there was a huge reconsideration when after a site visit they communicated that they didn't like what we

were doing but did not communicate what they wanted. In order to remedy that, A. Freedman has been presenting them with new versions of the project which was also passed around to Board members. They like particularly like the focus of looking at the future of informal science education (ISE). They want combination of 1 & 2 but don't want us to help individuals write proposals but it is within the scope for VSA to conduct workshops, create summaries to help people be better prepared to develop proposals. For VSA it is up to us to announce what kind of role we would like to take amongst any or all of the activities we proposed. What is it we are comfortable in doing, will feel rewarded in doing and believe that Board and the Membership would like to engage in. The budget is approx 100K. By Aug 2 VSA should have a fleshed out document that also includes the roles of the other partners in the grant. He requested that the Board come up with the role VSA would like to play. He mentioned that past projects that they had liked were workshops on evaluation (101), they also liked articles that were commissioned but some of the case officers were not happy because topics were not broadened past museums and program officers are involved in other things like, television programs, websites, radio, large screen format films, community based organizations like afterschool programs, 4H, and Scouts. Those most offended by past projects were Media officers because they feel that they did not get their money's worth out of CAISE. J. Johnson challenged Board members to decide which of those groups make the most sense for VSA to include. Suggestions were:

- C. Tisdal suggested that we should connect to VSA's strategic and operations plan that includes distance learning and professional development by repurposing the Evaluation 101 workshop for PIs and add additional material on how to pick an evaluator
- K. Morrissey mentioned that the 101 could be reformatted for people who want to know how to use evaluation in their work
- K. Ellenbogen noted that CARE with VSA members had already produced Evaluation 101, 201 and 301 for non-evaluators and we should look at repurposing those workshops into webinars
- K Morrissey also suggested a course about understanding current research on learning
- Attach these workshops to other conferences
- Saul suggested a workshop on gaming for ISE. He also felt VSA could help to build outreach which is something that takes place takes place when projects end so nobody knows how to evaluate it. This is critical for NSF's needs. A. Freedman said that If doing a TV program you need to describe how you will connect it to community groups and museums
- R. Bonnie suggested a toolkit that synthesized research about synthesis of how impact in Friedman's in book connects to the strands in the learning in informal environments book
- K Knudsen suggested getting away from workshops and think of ways to get professionals together to share ideas and communicate with each other for advanced professional development
- Joe suggested advocating for the visitor rather than for research or evaluation.
- R. Bonnie suggested turning VSA Conference workshops into distance learning webinars.
- E. Ledbetter suggested that we try to use this opportunity to increase VSA's capacity to address distance learning.

There was some confusion around the amount of the grant and J. Johnson stated that 100K was not the limit of the funding, A. Freidman confirmed. K. Ellenbogen suggested that board members should contact members of the CAISE oversight committee with their ideas about projects during the upcoming week.

J. Heimlich moved that the Board Meeting be adjourned, C. Tisdal seconded. The motion was adopted. The meeting adjourned at 4:50.

Karen Graham
Secretary