

**Minutes of the Visitor Studies Association
Board of Directors Meeting
July 24, 2011 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. and July 27, noon – 12:15 p.m.
Price Room, Palmer House Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois**

Present

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

Members:

Rick Bonney (arrived late), Dorothy Chen-Courtin, Cecilia Garibay, Leslie Hartog (arrived late), Joe Heimlich, Elisa Israel, Cheryl Kessler, Randi Korn (by telephone), Karen Knutson, Ellen McCallie, Caren Oberg, Saul Rockman, Jessica Sickler, Carey Tisdal, Robert "Mac" West

Association Executive Director	Eric Ledbetter
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Others

Program Officer National Science Foundation	Leslie Goodyear
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New Board Members:

Kate Haley-Goldman, Emlyn Koster, Troy Livingston, Jessica Luke, Kathleen Tinworth, Dave Ucko, Mira Zergani, Sandra Toto Martell

Absent: Laura Huerta Migus, Marcie Benne

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 8:35 a.m. K. Ellenbogen welcomed everyone to the meeting. She noted that the new board members would not be voting today but encouraged them to ask questions if they needed clarification of anything that was being discussed. She introduced all current and new board members.

2) Conflict of Interest Disclosure

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.

Name	Conflict?	Nature of Conflict
Rick Bonney	yes	Contracted by VSA to edit the CAISE PI manual for PI's
Dorothy Chen-Courtin	no	
Rita Deedrick	no	
Kirsten Ellenbogen	yes	VSA PI on CAISE and PI on BISE
Cecilia Garibay	no	
Karen Graham	no	
Leslie Hartog	no	
Joe Heimlich	no	
Elisa Israel	no	
Julie I. Johnson,	yes	Member of thought center group (oversight group) for CAISE
Cheryl Kessler	no	
Karen Knutson	yes	Co-PI on BISE
Randi Korn	no	
Ellen McCallie	no	
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.

President Report (K. Ellenbogen)

President Elect Report (D. McCreedy)

Secretary Report (K. Graham)

VP for Organizational Development Report (R. Deedrick)

- Resource Development Committee
- Board Development Committee

VP for Outreach Development Report (M. Sikora)

- Membership Committee
- Publications Committee

VP for Professional Development Report (K. Morrissey)

Executive Director's Report (E. Ledbetter)

D. McCreedy moved *"That the Consent Agenda be accepted"*, J. Heimlich seconded. The consent agenda was approved.

Deliberative agenda.

4) Approval of the Minutes of the Board Meeting of March 31, 2011

The minutes had been posted on Basecamp prior to the meeting.

Motion: C. Tisdal moved to approve the minutes, D. McCreedy seconded.

The minutes were approved as corrected.

5) Financial Quarterly Report

The Treasurer, J. Johnson, explained the reports she had posted on Basecamp. prior to the meeting and illustrated her remarks with a PowerPoint presentation (attached). She noted that the typical pattern for VSA finances is represented by a bell curve in that in the beginning of the year we spend more than we take in but in March/April as conference-related revenue comes in (registrations and sponsorships) this trend reverses and revenue exceeds expenses. As well later in the year when the bills for the conference come in, our expenses are greater than our revenue. She noted that the two main program-related sources of revenue are the conference and regional workshops.

She pointed out that 68% of revenue (through to June 30, 2011) can be attributed to programs, 12% to fundraising (i.e. general board giving and sponsorship for conference), 18% from CAISE, less that 15 from BISE and general operating (i.e. in kind contributions).

For expenses 61% goes to general operating (maintenance of the VSA office and support), 32% for CAISE, 5% to programs (this will change dramatically as we pay expenses from the conference), and 2% to BISE.

She displayed the budget using several different ratio analyses all of which showed VSA's finances to be within a "healthy" range. However, she pointed out that these ratios will change throughout the year as the proportion of expenses and revenue changes. D. Chen-Courtin remarked that the current statements overstate efficiency and liquidity due to the fact that the bills for the conference have not yet been received. J. Johnson concurred and mentioned that this is why these analyses are done again in the third quarter. Additionally, once conference bills have been paid projections will be made and she will determine if there are any trends (i.e. costs against grants) and bring those to the attention of the EC and Board. She thanked board members for being tolerant and patient and emphasized that accurate budgeting in the fall will be very important going forward.

6) 2012 Planning: Operational and budget planning for 2012. An overview of the processes for the 2012 Operational Plan and budget.

K. Ellenbogen pointed out that these are two of the most critical activities that the Board does. E. Ledbetter reviewed the progress on the operations plan by presenting and discussing a table that documented the progress on the Strategic Plan (see Deliberative Agenda Docs).

He mention that reaching the "Funders" and "Policy Makers" audiences is challenging because they are new audiences for us and fostering a relationship with these broader audiences is not something that we have been used to doing. However, some of the things that have been considered to reach these audiences are partnering with sister associations to provide content about evaluation and informal learning tailored to them and writing white papers and position statements.

M. Sikora explained that the new Communications Committee is now up and running and has focused its efforts on developing plans to communicate to each of the five audience segments. The Membership Committee is more internally and operationally focused. Efforts are being made to improve communications between committees and the Operations Plan is a good tool to help facilitate this.

On the present Operations Plan some areas did not progress as quickly as hoped, they are in the areas of pursuing collaborations with other projects that involve informal learning (ex. The National Girls Collaborative Project). As well we are behind schedule on delivering work for CAISE.

Going forward a new Operational Plan will be developed on a compressed schedule beginning at this board meeting (see agenda item No. 10) and ending in late summer. He solicited board members to review and evaluate the progress on this year's plan and decide what should continue, what should drop off and what new objectives should be added. It has been suggested that the focus of next year's plan could include a celebration of VSAs 25th conference. In September recommendations from each committee will be submitted to the Operations Planning Work Group who will review and make suggestions for improvement. If the suggestions are minor they can be approved via Basecamp but if they are extensive then a teleconference will be held to decide final disposition. Once this is done then budgets will be prepared and submitted for final approval at the December Board Meeting.

E. Koster inquired if VSA's intentions were going to be towards making it a more global organization. Board members noted that VSA has done several things to try to gain an international perspective:

- The Journal editor is Australian and is cognizant of representing international perspectives in the articles in the Journal;
- The Professional Development Committee has one member from Great Britain who has connected us with their VSA equivalent organization in the UK.;
- At the Phoenix Conference last year there was a "distance" session done with presenters from the UK. That group is also considering giving a bursary to one of its members that will enable them to attend the conference;
- The Newsletter has deliberately been writing interviews with people that live outside of the US; and
- We have been actively pursuing having a conference in Europe, possibly with international partners, but to date this has not been possible due to the cost.

J. Heimlich noted that it will be important to examine how international we are and to then determine what our intentions are vis-à-vis becoming more international in the future.

E. Koster suggested that we might consider meeting annually with a country that is doing work VSA should know about as well as consider deliberately extending hemispherically to Canada and Mexico.

J. Johnson reviewed the budget development process and general timeline. K. Ellenbogen emphasized that the Board Meeting in December is where the budget gets approved. K. McLean complimented the Treasurer on her clear explanations about the process and her dedication to educating the Board on its fiscal responsibilities. She noted that there has been tremendous progress made with regards to the budgeting process over the past 6 years.

7) Progress Report Building Informal Science education (BISE) grant: Find an Evaluator Database

E. Ledbetter informed the Board that the BISE grant is the 2nd of two major relationships that VSA has with NSF (the National Science Foundation). K. Ellenbogen and K. Knutson are PI's involved in this and represent their respective institutions. Realizing that the BISE grant aligns closely with VSA's strategic plan K. Ellenbogen and K. Knutson approached the board to let them know that this would be a great opportunity to take advantage of in order for us to meet some of our strategic goals.

E. Ledbetter reviewed the "Find an Evaluator" database which is a quick and simple way that people can access to help them find an evaluator. He demonstrated the alpha version of the database. He mentioned that a person's "Linkedin" profile will be the way that a user can access this information. E. Koster suggested that it should not just include US-based evaluators but should also contain international evaluators. K. Morrissey wondered if users may expect that this is somehow a recommendation for a "credentialed" evaluator. E. Ledbetter replied that VSA staff would review and validate an evaluators information before inclusion in the database but this will in no way imply a recommendation of a particular person. She asked if this database could be broadened to include students. E. Ledbetter said right now it was thought that only experienced evaluators would be included but he will

add this to a list for future consideration. D. Ucko inquired if VSA membership would be a requirement for inclusion in the database. E. Ledbetter said no but that information can be added to the evaluator's information sheet. E. Ledbetter emphasized that this database cannot be tied to any idea that these are recommended or credentialed evaluators, as, aside from a master's degree in evaluation, there is no current system for credentialing evaluators. E. McCallie noted that an inquiry should be made to see if this could be a requirement for inclusion in the database. C. Tisdal remarked that we need to think about the sustainability of this database in terms of funding for continuation and platform upgrades. She suggested that one way to do this would be to charge a "listing" fee if someone wanted to be included. J. Johnson suggested that, conversely, people who want to access the list could be charged a fee. K. Knutson noted that the next iteration (Beta version) of the database will be available within the next 6 weeks or so.

8. CAISE (Center for the Advancement of Informal Science Education) overview and update.

D. Ucko explained the difference between a grant (once the grant has been awarded, the NSF has very little say in what the grantee does with the money as long as it is consistent with the overall goals of the grant), a contractual agreement (where NSF buys a project/service where what is required is specified in advance) and a cooperative agreement (a grant with more stipulations (terms and conditions) which define the awardee/NSF relationship and which requires ongoing communications between the parties to ensure what the awardee is doing is consistent with what NSF wants to be done).

K. Ellenbogen described the CAISE structure and organization, projects, various initiatives, timeline and VSA's projects. She noted that VSA is at the center of the work being done and will help the Association move beyond informal science education into other informal learning spheres.

D. Ucko noted that VSA is unique in that it is the only CAISE organization that has individual members so it is a good opportunity for VSA to become more important to the informal science learning field.

VSA has put in place an Oversight Committee, led by R. Deedrick and M. Sikora, which will be monitoring what VSA will be doing for CAISE. D. Ucko and K Knutson congratulated K. Ellenbogen and the Oversight Committee for their hard work and supervision of this work. D. Ucko mentioned that the ISE evidence wiki will provide evidence for the impact of informal science education on learning and will help VSA address some of the audiences in its Strategic Plan.

CAISE projects are in place and funding through year 5 is assured. Projects for years 6-10 will be discussed over the next few days.

K. Ellenbogen mentioned that timelines for accomplishing the promised projects are tight and we have had some difficulty in them going. She emphasized that we will need to get these projects done in order to meet VSA's budget goals.

J. Johnson recommended that there be a communication to membership around CAISE and the status of the agreement. She inquired if the membership would be included in the

conversation about the projects for years 6-10 of the grant. R. Deedrick clarified that the discussion about the next CAISE projects will be this afternoon at the board meeting as well as on Tuesday night at this Conference and will include VSA committee members. K. Ellenbogen emphasized that as Co-PI on CAISE she does not have any signing authority for the CAISE projects rather D. McCreedy will be signing for VSA. As well, members of the Oversight Committee cannot be compensated for any VSA CAISE project.

E. McCallie mentioned that D. Ucko has written a good summary of CAISE that is very clear and it is available on the CAISE website and which was written for a broad audience to help them understand that CAISE is all about.

M. Sikora remarked that CAISE is a major portion of our budget for this year and we have under spent against this budget by approximately 150K. He asked if it is realistic to assume that we will be able to spend what was in the budget for this fiscal year. K. Ellenbogen stated that she estimates we will spend up to 120K and will do a short report with dates so the Board can see the timeline.

J. Johnson explained that, if we don't spend as much as budgeted, our planned budget and projections will be off unless we do something to correct it.

C. Tisdal cautioned that we need to be careful when we move forward with cooperative agreements by analyzing them with regards to the benefits and risks to VSA and whether their external rules will affect the internal practices that VSA has adopted. To that effect she recommended that we develop a short document that describes the parameters that VSA will follow when entering into these types of relationships. R. Korn concurred with the recommendation and mentioned that this will be an opportunity to review the VSA grants policy and possibly incorporate some of the C. Tisdal's concerns.

9. Opportunity for Board members to discuss issues with NSF Program Officer Leslie Goodyear

K. Ellenbogen introduced Leslie Goodyear, Program Officer for the National Science Foundation, who gave all board members an opportunity to ask questions about NSF. J. Johnson inquired about the proposed changes to the NSF proposal review criteria particularly with regards to the areas of "broader impacts" (i.e. outreach) and "intellectual merit". Goodyear replied that these changes have not been implemented yet as the Director wants to make NSF more cohesive and is interested in integrating education and outreach into the science directorates. She mentioned that there is increased interest in connecting scientists to the public through education programs. How this will be implemented is to be decided.

M. West inquired as to the rationale for making "prelims" optional. L. Goodyear answered that prelims are good for new applicants but it is not necessary for repeat applicants and the workload of program officers precludes making them compulsory.

E. Koster asked if program officers can override and encourage breakthrough ideas even though review by peers is neutral or negative. L. Goodyear replied that yes this was possible and at the discretion of the Program Officer but that there will be no official notification that this was done by the Program Officer. She mentioned that there is also

EPSCoR (Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research) funding for states that that are underrepresented with regards to NSF funding.

E. Koster said that the impression is that there is a decline in NSF funding for exhibitions. Goodyear noted that analysis shows that this is not true both in absolute numbers and dollars. Universities are getting more money than in the past and they are partnering with informal science institutions as Co-Pi's. She said that she would share that data with K. Ellenbogen who would post it on Basecamp for the Board.

E. Koster inquired if NSF makes a point of learning from projects that they have declined. L. Goodyear replied they need to constantly remind themselves during the review process not to be too conservative and to seriously consider projects that may be high risk but also high reward. Projects that failed also get discussed. She emphasized that it is important to report negative findings because these provide evidence for what doesn't work and helps the field learn.

M. Sikora asked if getting NSF funding precludes VSA from charging for use of the evaluator database. L. Goodyear emphasized that NSF does not prohibit the VSA from doing this however; restricted access based on membership in VSA may be prohibited. However, subject to budget review, it is possible that VSA could charge non-members for access and for Members it could be free.

D. Ucko asked for a description of the new NSF PRIME Program. L. Goodyear said that this is a program to support the development, demonstration and validation of innovative new methodologies and approaches in STEM evaluation. So far this year it looks like 5 to 7 projects will be funded. The Money is for advancing the understanding of evaluation methods and the hope is that it will build capacity to conduct better evaluations.

J. Johnson inquired if NSF, through PRIME would be willing to consider evaluation projects from outside the field of STEM education. L. Goodyear said that this would be difficult but if a case could be made that the learning from these evaluations could be applied to STEM education evaluation then it may be possible. She mentioned that NSF is open to funding projects that merge art and science.

10. Direction for VSA's role in CAISE years 6-10 that connects to VSA's strategic plan

R. Deedrick noted that the objective for this agenda item is to have the Board brainstorm their ideas on the scope of years 6-10 VSA projects for CAISE. E. Ledbetter took the floor and reviewed what VSA has done over the past several years using CAISE funding including:

- Running workshops;
- Writing articles;
- Updating the evaluation framework;
- Evidence wiki; and
- Informal roundtable

He anticipated that CAISE projects could give us an opportunity to address several of the audiences identified in VSA's strategic plan:

- Audience 2 (developers, designers implementers of informal learning experiences). The desired impact on this audience is to have them use data from informal learning studies to make decisions about improving informal learning experiences and organizational effectiveness; and
- Audience 3 (CEO's, Directors, upper level managers). Our objective with this audience is to have them use evaluation data to make strategic decisions about their respective institutions.

Questions to be discussed in this agenda item are:

What do we know about/believe that could influence/impact CAISE in the coming years?

- Distributed learning;
- Social media;
- Increase in people using personal mobile technologies to provide access to information;
- The growing number of academic museum studies programs;
- The integration of evidence into learning theory;
- Data visualization, visual literacy in general (includes research on the brain);
- An aging population;
- Enduring social problems;
- The growing relevance of qualitative data;
- Understanding differences especially non-western perspectives;
- Doing the right thing instead of doing things right;
- Being cognizant of why we evaluate and being sensitive to the effects we may have on what is being evaluated;
- Being anticipatory rather than reflective
- The increasing competition for people's time and money and more and more distractions.
- The overall visitor experience and ensuring that it remains relevant.
- The economy – discretionary funding continuing to be low

Clusters identified are: technology, the relevance of evaluation (benefits to individuals, communities and society), using evaluation in the aid of defining the value of social funding, specifically the value of funding museums.

What could CAISE's role be in responding to change?/ What could VSA's role be with CAISE?

- Funding evaluation that provides evidence of the impact of informal learning environments as a whole not only on a project by project basis;
- Demonstrating how valuable museums are to lifelong learning (i.e. connecting formal learning, informal learning and education);
- Helping to integrate information on how knowledge is generated, transferred and used.
- VSA could be helpful in curating and synthesizing information to help with information overload;
- Motivating the formal learning community to be interested in VSA;
- VSA could help BISE and CAISE to think about bringing in other institutions that aren't science based.

What proposal/program could VSA bring forward that would address some of the challenges (in

particular, audiences 2 and 3):

- Providing evidence/questions that will help organizations be/remain sustainable, even for those organizations that think they are “unique”;
- Helping the field think more broadly about evaluation by extending beyond what funders require of the evaluation;
- Bridging art and science disciplines by determining how to evaluate skill building rather than the achievement of content based learning;
- Documenting the unexpected outcomes/impacts of evaluations and analyze big picture trends;
- Documenting the long term impacts of evaluations;
- Determining alternative strategies for funding for an evaluation;
- Better targeting VSA regional workshops; and
- Integrating individual findings at the institutional level in the aid of sustainability of an organization.

Conversation continues on Tuesday, July 26, 2011 at 4:00 in the Presidents Suite.

11. Executive Session

E. Israel moved “*That the Board of Directors go into Executive Session*”, E. McCallie seconded. The Executive Session included all incoming board members that were present at the meeting.

After moving out of Executive Session, D. McCreedy moved “*That the Board meeting adjourn, to be resumed at noon on July 27, 2011*”

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Board of Directors Meeting
July 27, noon – 12:15 p.m.
State Ballroom, Palmer House Hilton Hotel, Chicago, Illinois

July 27, noon – 12:15 p.m.

The purpose of this meeting was to ensure a transition between incoming and outgoing board members.

12. Welcome to new Board Members and Officers

D. McCreedy thanked the outgoing President K. Ellenbogen, for her wise and energetic leadership and welcomed all new board members and officers.

13. Signing of Annual Conflict of Interest Disclosure forms

E. Israel collected the signed Conflict of Interest forms from new and continuing board members present at the meeting.

D. McCreedy moved “*That the Board Meeting be adjourned*”, E. Israel seconded.

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

Karen Graham
Secretary