

March 2010

Thank you for your interest in the Arizona Historical Society Certified Museum Program. The AHS Certified Program was originally developed to provide assistance to existing museums in smaller communities with limited staff and resources, as well as those who were at the “start-up” stage. Certified museums could take advantage of AHS curators to answer museum-related questions and who conducted workshops relating to all aspects of museum operations, collections management, professional development and public programming. Certified museums had access to AHS publications and received the *Journal of Arizona History*. In addition, certified museums could apply for small grants to help them in their operations. Today, AHS continues to offer these services and is pleased to network with its family of certified museums exchanging ideas with those who commit to preserving and promoting Arizona history.

At this time there are 68 certified museums across the state that interpret the history of their local communities for the enjoyment of residents and visitors alike. These AHS Certified Museums have certain characteristics in common which are described below. If your organization is interested in becoming an Arizona Historical Society Certified Museum, please review the *AHS Certified Museum Profile and Explanation* that follows and complete the *Certification, Review and Verification* form available on the last two pages. AHS is here to share our resources and answer any questions you may have, (520) 617-1169, [dortiz@azhs.gov](mailto:dortiz@azhs.gov).

We look forward to hearing from you and, together, *Lets Make History!*

Sincerely,

Anne I. Woosley, Ph. D.  
Executive Director

## **AHS Certified Museum Profile**

Museums certified by the Arizona Historical Society (AHS) have certain characteristics in common that, combined, create the AHS Certified Museum Profile. In developing this profile, AHS follows the standards or “best practices” established by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Association of Museums (AAM) that govern our museum profession. Arizona Historical Society staff are ready, willing, and able to assist local museums in their operations, on questions of collections management, public programming---in short, in whatever capacity may be useful---in our mutual effort to preserve, interpret, and promote Arizona history. The AHS Certified Museum Profile has these universal attributes:

1. Is guided by a mission statement that clearly describes the purpose of the museum.
2. Operates as a not-for-profit organization.
3. Has a governing structure including by-laws, articles of incorporation, and board of directors.
4. Conducts meetings and holds elections on a regularly scheduled basis.
5. Develops membership or volunteer organizations that support the museum.
6. Opens to the public on a regularly scheduled basis for at least 208 hours per year.
7. Offers educational and public programs, special events, and research tied to its mission.
8. Encourages public awareness and a sense of value for Arizona history.
9. Endorses the collection and preservation of historic materials that relate to its mission.
10. Ensures a secure environment for visitors, staff, and collections in its care.

## **Profile Explanations**

### **1. The Museum Mission Statement**

When developing its mission statement, board members and staff should assess the assets of their museum and define its purpose. A good mission statement *sets the limits*, including what will be accepted into collections, the historical periods and geographic boundaries that govern the museum's activities. Mission statements serve as guides when questions about the suitability of collections acquisition and management, public programming and special functions, or other operations arise.

### **2. Operating as a Not-for-Profit**

To become a not-for-profit organization in the state of Arizona, Articles of Incorporation are filed with the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC). When approved and with the registration of the museum as a nonprofit organization by the ACC, it can file with the IRS for 501(3) recognition. The 501(3) status not only exempts the museum from federal income taxes, but permits donors to deduct monetary and in-kind contributions.

### **3. Governing Structure**

In the not-for-profit application process, both the State of Arizona and IRS require documents including articles of incorporation and by-laws that govern the organization. Governing documents define museum policies and assign responsibilities of board members, staff, and volunteers.

### **4. Regularly Scheduling Meetings and Election of Officers**

The success and vitality of museums depends on regularly scheduled meetings that bring together staff and board members to discuss and assess current museum operations and future directions. Election of officers, too, is conducted on a defined schedule, preferably with established term limits (for both officers and board members).

### **5. Developing Membership and Volunteers**

Membership and volunteer organizations are invaluable to the success of most museums. They contribute their time as docents, assist curators behind-the-scenes, provide administrative help, and make monetary donations. They often served as the conduit linking the museum to the community it serves.

## **6. Public Visitation**

AHS Certified Museums are open an average of at least four hours per week (208 hours annually), with many following a seasonal schedule based on climate and tourism patterns. Public hours are posted at the museum entrance and advertised using signage, flyers, brochures, the internet, and other forms of media.

## **7. Promoting Public Programs**

AHS Certified Museums promote Arizona history through public programs of various sorts including exhibitions, docent tours, classroom presentations, providing access to collections for researchers, hosting special events, celebrations, and commemorations. Importantly, the museum's public programs relate to its mission statement.

## **8. Encouraging Public Awareness of Arizona History**

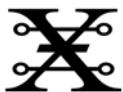
Successful history museums partner with local governments, businesses, newspapers, service organizations, schools, and libraries to champion the history of their communities. Many Certified Museums take advantage of AHS workshops, seminars, and individual contact with professional staff to exchange ideas and be of mutual assistance, as well as becoming members of state, regional, or national museum organizations.

## **9. Endorsing Sound Collections Management Practices**

AHS Certified Museums are expected to have, or be in process of developing, a collections policy that governs the acquisition, accession, care, and use of objects, documents, oral histories, maps, photographs (including electronic formats) related to their individual missions. AHS staff are available to assist with any collections management issues as requested.

## **10. Ensuring Safe Environments for Visitors, Staff, and Collections**

Security measures are implemented to protect the museum and its contents from theft and vandalism, while safety precautions are evident that protect staff and visitors to create a pleasant environment. Conservation methods are comprehensive and shield collections from detrimental elements including direct sunlight, insects, moisture, or temperature fluctuations.



Arizona Historical Society  
Certification, Review and Verification Form



Name of Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person \_\_\_\_\_

Phone and Email if different than above \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Incorporation \_\_\_\_\_ IRS Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Mission Statement Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Date Adopted \_\_\_\_\_

If new/revised provide date \_\_\_\_\_

*Attach a copy of current mission statement.*

Not-for-Profit Status Current Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

By-laws Current Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Governing Body Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Elections Held Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ How often \_\_\_\_\_

Business Meetings Held Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ How often \_\_\_\_\_

Membership Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Dues Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Provide membership levels \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Volunteers Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Approximate hours/year volunteer contribution \_\_\_\_\_

Collecting Institution Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Approximate % relating to Arizona history \_\_\_\_\_

Objects Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Archives Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Photographs Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Public Programs Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Type \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Programs Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Encourage Research Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

Exhibits Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ Approximate sq. ft. of exhibit space \_\_\_\_\_

Open to public a minimum of 208 Hours/Year Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_

List regularly scheduled hours \_\_\_\_\_

List regularly scheduled closings \_\_\_\_\_

Significant changes from previous year Yes\_\_\_ No\_\_\_ If so, please comment:

\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby affirm that the above information is correct.

Name President or Director (print) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

*Return completed form to:  
Arizona Historical Society  
949 E. 2<sup>nd</sup> St.  
Tucson, AZ 85719-4898*

*dortiz@azhs.gov  
520-617-1169*