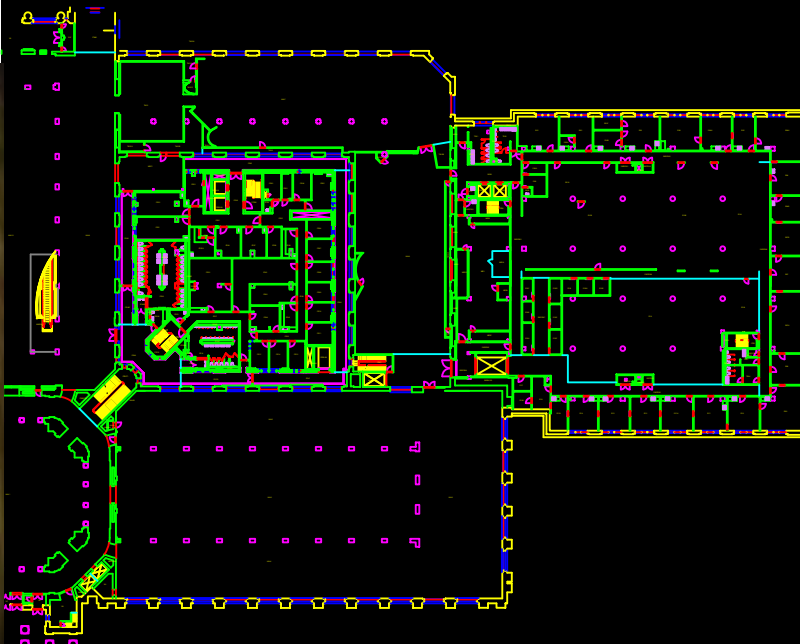


NATIONAL MUSEUM of  
NATURAL HISTORY

# VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Executive Summary



Ensuring a world-class visitor experience



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of Natural History*

# Visitor Experience Living Strategy

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## **Executive Summary**

### **I. Introduction**

This strategy document is intended to guide and inform the museum's planning and management relating to the visitor experience at the National Museum of Natural History. The strategies herein stem from an internal report produced in 2006 by The Guest Services Task Group (GSTG) for the Director of NMNH, wherein the formation of the Branch of Visitor Experience (VisEx) was suggested. In 2010 the Branch was formalized with the hiring of a manager to lead the development and coordination of the short- and long-term actions of improving the visitor experience at NMNH.

### **II. Staffing & Budget**

The GSTG identified a VisEx team (without a Butterfly Pavilion responsibility) as outlined should initially consist of 7-8 fulltime staff. NASM has a total of 9 paid FTEs. Currently the team consists of 3 3/4 full time staff and one 1/2 FTE detail. After two years of operation it is clear that no fewer than six FTEs and one intern are necessary for the minimum day-to-day operations of the Branch as has been performed since its forming. Along with the Chief of the Branch the following staff structure is recommended

### **III. Market Orientation**

The goals and actions of Visitor Experience fall into two broad categories; our efforts instill a market and a service orientation. By market orientation we mean a strategic position that obligates the museum to concentrate on a profitable visitor experience. And the acknowledgement that the museum requires a team who is able to develop an appropriate analytic framework for exploring innovation as relates to increased and profitable visits from specific markets. The Branch of Visitor Experience proposes to be at the heart of such a team. Several goals within this strategy work to establish and satisfy a so-called market orientation, with the major example being the integration and profit of retail experiences throughout the museum, INTEGRATION being the operative word.

### **IV. Service Orientation**

This second of the two broad categories constitutes the bulk of the Museum's legacy preference for service superiority, focusing on achieving the museum's social mission. We believe that visitors do not merely wish to see an exceptional collection, but also engage in meaningful experiences. A service orientation paradigm places service at the center of our exchange with visitors. Already, and in the years to come our services will be critical to the success of our exhibitions. Further, exhibitions can be seen as a medium for the museum's services. Of course holistically, a service orientation in museums consists of both a quality orientation (i.e. a robust and well-trained front-line staff) and custodial orientation, however in VisEx we will only focus on the quality, and leave the custodial to our conservation and collections teams.

### **V. Conclusion**

Broad leadership implications include overall support of these goals by working to imbed them into extant and emerging plans, budgets, and strategies across the museum. Specific leadership implications include: (a) adopting or otherwise advancing the strategic benefits – laid out herewith – of a visitor experience team at the Museum (b) articulating the function, scope and character of the Branch of Visitor Experience, (c) supporting the necessary staffing levels of the visitor experience team of one of the