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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE BENCHMARK POSITION DESCRIPTION

Museum Curator GS-1015-12

Introduction

The incumbent serves as a museum curator for one or more parks or offices. The purpose of this position is to provide direction over extensive museum collections and carry out responsibilities in the four museum functions of collections, exhibits, research, and education. Professional fields of studies and expertise must be pertinent to the parks resources and themes.

Major Duties (80-100%)

Directs an intricate program of museum activities that involve sensitive and complex collections issues that may impact a wide variety of park issues.

Provides overall professional and technical direction for the museum collection program, plans for and develops recommendations for programming priorities of all museum management functions, and ensures that NPS and professionally recognized procedures are applied in all operations. The collections cover any one or a combination of disciplines, including archeology, ethnology, history, archives, biology, geology, and paleontology.

Represents the superintendent when working with others on museum matters. Develops and maintains liaison and effective working relations with related groups and individuals, agencies, and the public. Attends management and professional conferences and other events for the purposes of exchanging information and advancing advocacy for park stewardship.

Represents park on NPS regional or national task groups or similar organizations. Makes presentations in the parks, in public gatherings, and at professional meetings.

Assists staff in parks, centers, and support offices by providing direct technical and programmatic advice and support.

Develops strategic plans, work plans and schedules, project statements, scopes of work, cost estimates, and proposals to justify funding requests and accomplish goals. Maintains awareness of applicable funding sources within NPS and outside. Tracks use of funds and prepares accomplishment reports.

Develops and implements long range plans for the development, evaluation,

documentation, preservation, research, and interpretation of the museum collection within the context of the park's mission, objectives, and resources.

Develops guidelines to deal with the more complex or unusual problems, or with novel, undeveloped or controversial aspects of museum collections and their management.

Consults with the all divisions to assure the park's compliance with legislative requirements and NPS policy dealing with preservation of museum objects and, as required, with other cultural and natural resource management concerns. As appropriate and in compliance with law and policy, consults with cultural groups (e.g., tribes) on the management of collections in which they have an interest.

Ensures development and implementation of all required museum collection programs and plans in compliance with the NPS museum property accountability rules and procedures as described in NPS-28 Cultural Resources Management Guideline, NPS-77 Natural Resources Management Guideline, NPS Museum Handbook, and other publications as applicable.

Consults with the resources division and support office cultural and natural resources personnel to ensure that compliance and long-term preservation concerns related to the historic structures, archeological sites, and natural components within the unit are properly considered as they relate to museum management. Is responsible for or makes significant contributions to the preparation of historic preservation documentation, compliance, and background materials as required by Section 106 and Section 110 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NPS Management Policies, NPS-28 Cultural Resources Management Guideline, and NPS-77 Natural Resources Management Guideline for all park undertakings. Recommends, plans for, and executes collections investigations required to meet NHPA, NEPA, NAGPRA, NPS guidelines, and the research needs of the park. Reviews projects initiated by NPS staff at the park and makes recommendations for approval to park managers.

Negotiates cooperative and interagency agreements and other cooperative instruments needed to effectively carry out museum goals. Serves as Contracting Officer's Technical Representative for projects conducted through contracts, interagency agreements, and cooperative agreements.

Directs the activities of the unit's library, if applicable.

May supervise seasonal, temporary, permanent, VIP, and other personnel, but less than 25% of the time.

Collections. Recommends acquisitions to the superintendent according to the scope of collection statement. Seeks acquisition of needed objects consistent with available

funding, the park's scope of collection statement, and collection management plan, including location of sources, ordering, and encouragement of donations to enhance the acquisition program. Deaccessions unneeded holdings, following established Service policies.

Accessions and catalogs objects, verifying the accuracy of information in collection records and files. Annually inventories collections. Maintains all record keeping and documentation for museum collections.

Maintains automated collections management data using Servicewide systems and according to Servicewide standards. Develops reports, provides interpretive and reference services, and analyzes inventory and monitoring data, using automated systems.

Organizes the collections and maintains proper preservation, security and fire protection, collection storage, and research conditions. Monitors, controls, and maintains the environment for collections, including light, temperature, relative humidity, and air quality, and manages an integrated pest management program.

Monitors and prepares programs for use of the collections, including research, loans, reference services, enforcement of use policy, and evaluation of collection-related research requests.

Seeks the services of a conservator to assess conditions and provide treatments. Provides recommendations and makes decisions regarding long-term conservation needs, either in-house or through contract, and provides plans for meeting these needs.

Performs conservation work within incumbent's capabilities, and implements short-term conservation-related practices for perishable (i.e., vegetal, shell, bone, hide, feather, paper, wood), ceramic, stone, and metal materials.

Advises on preservation techniques and the removal of artifacts and specimens from the field.

Works with records manager to identify records needed for historical purposes. Provides authoritative technical direction for management of the park's archives including, but not limited to, maps, notes, data records, photographic materials, plans, corporate archives, family papers, and resource management records.

Exhibits. Plans and implements proper curatorial procedures for on-site and outside exhibits. Implements procedures to preserve and protect objects while on exhibit.

Researches content documentation for exhibits. Participates in developing exhibit plans. Plans and executes on-site and traveling exhibits. Identifies exhibit needs,

develops project statements, seeks funding to support exhibit development. Develops scope of work to use with Harpers Ferry Center and contracts for exhibit services. Reviews exhibit plans, developed by others for content, preservation, and security.

Research. Performs work in one or more of the three categories of research integral to the work of a museum curator. The three categories are: “scholarly” research which contributes to the sum of mankind’s knowledge; “technical” research which is the study and innovation necessary to restore and preserve specimens, artifacts, or objects of the collection; and “applied” research which refers to all the investigation, collection and arrangement of information necessary to support the educational and public service responsibilities of the museum.

In the case of “scholarly” research, the results frequently appear in publications as scholarly articles in appropriate professional journals. In the case of “technical” research, if the results are significant, they may be published as technical articles; but often the results of the research are used directly in solving the problem with the artifact or collection that required the research. In the case of “applied” research, the results are often the correct labeling and explanatory material that accompanies the exhibits, the synthesizing of information to answer public inquiries about the exhibit or artifact, the correct identification of an artifact or specimen, or the incorporation of the material into popular publications, articles and pamphlets. Often the results of any of the types of research are published in reports about the collection and artifacts.

Conducts research necessary to identify and/or authenticate museum objects, to obtain necessary catalog data, and to develop new techniques for collection preservation. Researches identification, authentication, dates, provenance, historical and scientific data, legal (e.g., copyright), and other information as required for the collections and for individuals and organizations when requested.

Education. Assists in the general visitor services program when called upon. As appropriate, develops interpretive and educational programs using the museum collections.

Assists in the development of cluster-wide and other curatorial training programs. Develops and conducts curatorial training courses.

Participates in professional meetings and seminars concerning museum and historic preservation fields.

Factor 1. Knowledge Required by the Position Level 1-7; 1250 points

Knowledge of NPS planning and management requirements and guidelines so that plans result in programs that provide adequate long-term protection for resources.

Comprehensive knowledge of the full range of National Park Service and professional museum management policy.

Thorough knowledge of the science and art of museum management, including collection management, museum records, specimen classification, cataloging, repository procedures, and detailed familiarity with the preservation and protection of a wide range of museum objects in a variety of circumstances.

Knowledge of management of objects, specimens, and archives for all disciplines represented in the park's collections. If applicable, must have knowledge of issues pertaining to Native Americans or other cultural groups to which the collections pertain.

Ability to conceptualize, develop, and implement long- and short-term budgetary plans for museum collection management, including but not limited to, meeting requirements of storage, research, exhibition, preservation, protection, interpretation/education, and collection growth.

In-depth knowledge of program management and administration of budget, contracts, and personnel.

Experienced in evaluating the impact of proposed research on the museum collection.

Comprehensive knowledge of professional museum, archives, and library operational standards.

Experience and basic skills in photography, care and conservation of the materials necessary to manage and maintain the museum's photographic collection, and to provide technical guidance for the management/maintenance of other unit photographic resources.

Some experience with the concepts of exhibit design and preservation of objects on exhibit.

Experience in public contact and reference services.

Ability to conceptualize, develop, and manage complex programs and to create innovative solutions to problems insoluble through the application of traditional solutions.

Comprehensive knowledge of the various museum-related professional organizations and the ability to direct or adapt this resource to the solution of NPS museum concerns and problems. Must adhere to professional codes of ethics established by professional organizations in museum management and related disciplines.

Ability to conduct complex research necessary to identify and authenticate museum objects and to develop new techniques for collections management, preservation or conservation.

Comprehensive knowledge of the technical literature and media concerning all aspects of museum work, and the ability to employ a broad range of instructional techniques and media to communicate this knowledge to NPS personnel.

Knowledge of advanced computer skills to apply to large information management system for collections. Must have basic knowledge of NPS natural and cultural resources databases and inventories.

Ability to prepare and direct the preparation of plans, reports, studies, proposals, and evaluations of collections management.

Ability to make oral presentations to professional and public groups on museum collections management and the collection types represented by the unit's collections.

Factor 2. Supervisory Controls Level 2-4; 450 points

The supervisor sets the overall goals and resources available. Guidance is provided only to determine priorities, approve work plans, and assist in working through unprecedented situations that have a bearing on the overall program.

The incumbent independently plans, designs, implements, and manages the program with a minimum of direct supervision. Independent judgement is required on a regular basis in developing, testing, and refining procedures and methods, and in the application of these methods in the field. The incumbent resolves most problems that arise and coordinates the work both within the work unit and with other park divisions. The incumbent keeps the supervisor informed of progress, potentially controversial problems, and concerns, issues or other matters having far-reaching implications.

The supervisor evaluates the completed work based on general adequacy in meeting program or project objectives, expected results, and compatibility with other work. Work produced is considered technically correct and is normally accepted without significant change.

Factor 3. Guidelines Level 3-4; 450 points

Guidelines include laws, regulations, policies, scientific protocols, plans, procedures, and any additional directions given and defined by the supervisor. Policies and precedents are applicable but are stated in general terms; guidelines are scarce or of limited use. Guidelines are often inadequate to deal with the more complex or unusual problems, or with novel, undeveloped or controversial aspects of museum collections and their management encountered at the field level. These kinds of situations occur when precedents or guides point toward conflicting decisions; recent court decisions or legislation may appear to require a technical decision at variance with existing guides; or there may be relatively few precedents or guides which are pertinent to specific methods; or proven methods are incomplete. The employee uses initiative and

resourcefulness in deviating from traditional methods or researching trends and patterns to develop new methods, criteria or proposed new policies.

Factor 4. Complexity Level 4-5; 325 points

The work includes varied duties requiring many different and unrelated processes and methods that are applied to a broad range of activities or substantial depth of analysis. Decisions regarding what needs to be done include major areas of uncertainty in approach, methodology, or interpretation and evaluation processes that result from such elements as continuing changes in program, technological developments or conflicting requirements. The work requires originating new techniques, establishing criteria or developing new information.

Assignments involve sensitive and complex issues that require solving problems concerned with novel, undeveloped or controversial aspects. The problems are difficult due to the abstract nature of the concepts, or the existence of serious conflicts among scientific requirements, program direction, and administrative requirements. These conditions create major areas of uncertainty in the decision-making process. The incumbent must be able to exercise professional skills in curatorial research, evaluation, and writing applied to (1) a broad range of themes or (2) substantial depth of analysis.

Curatorial functions require the care and maintenance of a large number of diverse objects at multiple locations within the National Park Service unit. The work of the incumbent consists of a wide variety of broad professional and technical functions (research, collection, exhibits, and education) involving a complex array of management tasks.

Objects in the collections are of a diverse nature, requiring differing environments, treatment, and repository conditions. The incumbent must also identify a wide variety of objects from different disciplines. Identification and authentication of collection items are usually dependent upon available precedent.

Exhibit planning and design functions include background research and suggestions, and development of exhibits scripts and documentation.

Research assignments are usually projects of limited scope with readily identifiable objectives. They may be small independent studies, or they may represent a segment of a large structure of related investigations; in either case they are expected to result in a publishable addition to the body of knowledge related to the field of inquiry, or to a comparable contribution to the development of new and recognizably improved technique for the preservation or restoration of valuable and/or rare collection material. Research usually builds on a foundation of earlier scholarship which developed basic theory and principles.

The education/public service function typically includes docent activities and talks or

lectures within museum exhibit areas, and routine correspondence providing informational material. Technical advice is regularly provided to NPS employees and outside agencies such as local historical societies and other government agencies. Aid to researchers requires close personal attention to protect the objects and to afford the researchers adequate benefit from the materials and related documentation.

The incumbent must be especially versatile and innovative in order to recognize new approaches, devise new or improved techniques or strategies for obtaining effective results, or to anticipate future trends and requirements. The person must be able to (1) exercise good professional judgment in ensuring the appropriate consideration of museum collections in the overall picture of park operations, development, interpretation, and resources management; (2) identify resources, evaluate their significance, develop management options that take into account all levels and areas of concern, and (3) prepare plans to preserve, conserve, mitigate impacts, and manage the resources.

Factor 5. Scope and Effect Level 5-4; 225 points

The skill, efficiency, and dedication of the incumbent directly affects the status of the extensive collection of cultural and natural resources and references. Successful accomplishment of the duties ensures the preservation of an important segment of the natural and cultural heritage of the nation, and thus affects a large number of people on a continuing basis. The work involves establishing criteria, formulating projects, assessing program effectiveness or investigating or analyzing a variety of unusual conditions, problems or questions. The product or service affects a wide range of agency activities, major activities or issues, or the operation of other agencies or entities. Cooperation with other organizations in the museum world results in increased favorable public awareness of the role of the NPS.

The collections are significant in size and scope and include multiple disciplines. The incumbent must be familiar with specialized policies, procedures, and ethics for managing each collection type as well as current professional issues in each discipline. Collections activity includes frequent acquisitions, ongoing cataloging or refinement of documentation, use of collections in multiple and changing exhibits, multiple weekly reference requests, and multiple loans at any given time.

Because the scope of work covers more complex or unusual problems, the incumbent develops new or improved techniques or criteria for the conduct of projects dealing with such problems. The work influences the effectiveness or acceptability of agency goals and programs, especially as they relate to state officials, Native American organizations and other traditionally associated groups, and program managers or specialists in outside agencies.

Factor 6. Personal Contacts Level 6-3; 60 points

Internal contacts are regularly made with all levels of employees in parks, support and central offices, and regional offices in cultural and natural resources management,

interpretation, and museum services. Outside contacts include staff of the American Association of Museums, individual museum personnel throughout the nation, tribal or cultural group representatives, researchers, dealers, schools, organizations, other agencies or institutions, and private donors. Contacts are typically not established on a routine basis, and the role and authority are identified and developed during the course of the contact.

Factor 7. Purpose of Contacts Level 7-2; 50 points

The purposes of contacts are to provide professional advice to managers and other staff; to aid in carrying out resources management program direction and policy; to direct museum collection management activities; to exchange technical data; to insure compliance with laws and regulations; to strengthen the professional level of museum management work; to arrange for use of unit resources in outside exhibits; to seek assistance in carrying out the museum management program; to train; to motivate or influence others in matters pertaining to the management of museum objects, collections, and programs; and to secure cooperation for park programs from other agencies, individual or interest groups.

Factor 8. Physical Demands Level 8-2; 20 points

The work requires mental alertness, better than average manual dexterity, and mobility. Although primarily sedentary, inspections and operations evaluations involve activities demanding a certain amount of exertion such as walking, climbing, crawling, lifting of heavy objects, bending, stooping, and reaching. Working with collections can involve prolonged exposure to hazardous materials and equipment. Working with lighting systems, environmental control systems, and alarm systems can involve exposure to electrical current and the use of power tools with attendant physical hazards. The work entails the ability to concentrate for long periods of time.

Factor 9. Work Environment Level 9-1; 5 points

Most of the work is performed in an office and storage or laboratory facility. Frequent visits are made to the library, visitor center, and other museums in the park. The incumbent makes occasional field trips to the backcountry. Some travel to other facilities and museums, as well as to training and professional meetings is required.

Total Points 2835