Museum Exhibit Design
Role of Exhibit Advisory Stakeholders

Introduction to Exhibits:
Interactive exhibits are complex, unstaffed mediums of presentation used to deliver information in order to create lasting impressions and foundational launch points for exploration. Most permanent exhibits are designed for constant use over a period of 20-30 years before full replacement. To achieve these ends, components are created through an exhibit development process which integrates cognitive and educational theory, behavioral analysis and physical design. This allows us to ensure that designs will hold up to use, changing science and changing trends. The EcoTarium is on a fairly quick 5-year permanent exhibit development cycle. (For perspective, many larger museums operate on 10-15 year development cycles.) We are lucky to have an exhibit staff with decades of experience in this field, which helps us to produce at this quicker pace. We also follow a formal exhibit development process which incorporates best practices in the field and field ethics guidelines.

Our Visitors:
Our visitors include ages 0 to 102 and range in science background from novice to professional. We target our interactives for very specific age ranges, in an attempt to provide something for everyone in a family group during a visit. In many interactives, we also aim to provide multiple potential roles for adults to take in facilitating the learning experience of their children, as well as learners themselves.

What is an Advisory Stakeholder?
Advisory Stakeholders are individuals who have been identified as representing a key constituency (funders/visitors/Board), museum department or intellectual specialty vital to the development of a specific exhibit.

The Role of an Advisory Stakeholder:
During the exhibit development process, Advisory Stakeholders will be asked to provide feedback during key junctures. Each Advisory Stakeholder represents broader stakeholder communities which have a vested interest in the success of the final exhibit. The role of the Advisory Stakeholder is to represent and report back to the larger stakeholder communities they represent in order to aid the Core Exhibit Development Team in identifying potential pitfalls and opportunities which should be considered during this process. It is important to note that in addition to Advisory Stakeholders, members of the Core Exhibit Development Team will conduct 1000 or more
interviews/observations/focus groups with Museum visitors through the course of this project and that the results of this social science research will play a large role in shaping many exhibit development decisions. It is also important to note that Advisory Stakeholders are advisors and not exhibit developers. Advisors may find that some feedback may not be realistically incorporated into the final design. Many potential interactives “fail” the prototyping process, if they do not achieve the intended learning goals, safety and durability standards, etc. Thus the early exhibit development process identifies 30 – 50% more potential interactives than can fit into the final exhibit to allow for this natural attrition rate. Ultimate decisions are made by our professional Exhibit Development Staff who have the training to navigate through human subject and cognitive research, architectural and compliance codes, technological advances and product durability testing needed for implementation of final designs.

**Time Commitment:** Stakeholder advisors will be asked to commit to two 3-hour meetings twice yearly during the final four years of the exhibit development process (generally spring and fall), with an hour of reading preparation before each meeting.

**Exhibit Timeline:**
The exhibit development process began with front end visitor evaluation last year and is now entering the second year of development in a five year development process.