

Oklahoma Senate Committee on Appropriations

2012-2013 Performance Report

Oklahoma Historical Society

Agency Mission Statement:

The Oklahoma Historical Society is a state agency/private membership organization dedicated to collecting, preserving, and sharing the history of Oklahoma and its people.

This mission statement was adopted by the OHS Board of Directors in 1989 and is reviewed each year as part of the planning process.

Lead Administrator:

Dr. Bob L. Blackburn is the executive director and the appointing authority for the OHS. Dr. Blackburn was named deputy director for operations in 1989 and executive director in 1999.

Governance:

As authorized in Title 53 of the Oklahoma Statutes, the OHS Board of Directors consists of 25 members. Thirteen of those members are elected by OHS members; twelve are appointed by the Governor. The three-year terms are staggered and apportioned by districts to ensure geographical balance.

The current elected members are: Jack Baker, OKC; Bill Corbett, Tahlequah; Bob Burke, OKC; Betty Crow, Altus; Sandra Olson, Waynoka; Deena Fisher, Woodward; Patricia Loughlin, Stillwater; Martha Pennington, Ada; Betty Price, OKC; Guy Logsdon, Tulsa; Emmy Stidham, Checotah; Lewis Stiles, Broken Bow; and Barbara Thompson, OKC.

The current appointed members are: Frederick Drummond, Pawhuska; Karen Keith, Tulsa; Sherry Muchmore, Ponca City; Mickey Clagg, Norman; Leonard Logan, Vinita; John Mabrey, Tulsa; Shirley Nero, Clearview; Cheryl Evans, Tonkawa; Charles Tate, Ardmore; James Waldo, OKC; Martha Lippert, Edmond; and Sherry Beasley, OKC.

The president of the board appoints members to the following advisory committees: Museums and Sites; State Museum; Research; Collections; American Indian History; Historic Preservation; Executive; Annual Meeting; and Nominating. The full board meets quarterly.

Governance Accountability:

Attached are the minutes of the OHS Quarterly Board Meetings since July 1, 2012. The OHS Constitution and Bylaws stipulate that three consecutive absences will result in removal from the board of directors.

Modernization Efforts:

In broad terms, the OHS for the past 22 years has steadily changed the corporate culture to include more entrepreneurial innovation based on three strategies: higher standards, greater efficiency, and partnerships. The transition started with the \$1.7 million conversion of the Route 66 Museum in 1993, gained momentum with the \$62 million Oklahoma History Center in 1999, and became standard operating procedure with the \$9 million expansion of the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center in 2007. In each case, state support was predicated on private fund raising capabilities, demands in the market place, and transparent accountability to determine success or failure. That entrepreneurial spirit is now part of every planning effort for the entire agency.

Core Mission:

The OHS planning process, organized into four distinct phases, offers recurring opportunities to evaluate adherence to the core mission of “collecting, preserving, and sharing Oklahoma history.” If a project does not meet the simple test of accomplishing at least one of those goals, it is eliminated at any stage of the planning process. If a project meets all three criteria, it moves up in terms of priority.

Private Alternatives:

The OHS works in a field that has little or no profit potential. The fees collected, either for research materials, admission to museums, or sales of books, typically cover only the costs of delivering those services or products. The best alternatives to total state subsidies include management contracts with local non-profit groups who operate museums and sites and fund raising efforts to “collect, preserve, and share” where individuals, corporations, or foundations offer their support.