



Smithsonian  
*National Museum of Natural History*

Office of the Director

## **SPECIAL EVENTS POLICY**

Thank you for your interest in the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History! We are pleased that you are considering the Museum for your proposed special event. The success of your event is very important to us, and our special event coordinators are eager to assist you and help make your event a wonderful occasion.

The Smithsonian is supported by Federal Appropriations, by the trust resources of the Smithsonian Institution, and by the generosity of donors – foundations, corporations, organizations and individuals. Since there is no public admission charge to the Museum, it is through such financial support that the Museum's scientific and education mission is possible.

It is traditional that companies and organizations who offer an unrestricted contribution to the Museum are invited to celebrate their gift by co-sponsoring a special event in the Museum. The Museum welcomes this opportunity to recognize donors. However, it is required that proposed events and the companies or organizations co-sponsoring them be consistent with the goals and mission of the National Museum of Natural History. The recognition of a generous gift through a special event does not imply a commercial endorsement.

### **APPROVAL CRITERIA**

The following types of events are not permitted at the Smithsonian:

- Purely social events of a personal nature (weddings, birthdays, bar mitzvahs);
- fund-raising events for non-Smithsonian organizations or groups;
- events of a partisan, political, or religious nature or designed to promote or advocate positions inconsistent with the Smithsonian's mission.

In addition, events are not permitted which:

- charge admission fees (excepting conference registration fees for conferences cosponsored by the Smithsonian Institution which are subject to special conditions)
- sell tickets;
- collect donations;
- have a cash bar;
- hold raffles;

- display or promote commercial products during an event or sell articles while in the Museum, with the exception of events conducted by Smithsonian Museum Shops or the Smithsonian Associates programming;
- advance, promote, advocate or otherwise deal with policy and/or legislative initiatives other than those that are Smithsonian-related.

Consistent with the objectives of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Museum facilities shall not be made available to any organization that practices or advocates discrimination based on age, sex, color, religion, national origin, or condition of disability.

The Museum reserves the right to deny a request for a special event based on an outside organization's incompatibility with the Museum's mission and goals, or based on a specific event's incompatibility with the same.

## **TERMS**

The Museum's Office of Special Events will prepare a Memorandum of Agreement that outlines the parameters of the event, including date, times, contribution, expected number of guests and spaces within the Museum to be used. The Memorandum of Agreement must be signed by the donor company or organization representative and returned to the Office of Special Events by the date specified in the Memorandum. The event will be confirmed when the signed Memorandum and the contribution are received by the Museum's Special Events Office. Payment is required prior to the event. During periods of high demand, a non-refundable deposit of \$5,000.00 may be required. In these instances, the deposit will be considered an advance payment on the contribution. The contribution includes the considerable overtime support costs required to keep the Museum open for an event and the services of our special event coordinators. The support costs are based on the security, custodial and labor requirements of an event. If additional time is requested for an event (more than 3 1/2 hours), or if the complexity of the set-up and breakdown for an event requires additional Museum support, an estimate of additional charges will be provided before the event. These charges will be invoiced after the event.

Once an event is confirmed, Smithsonian policy requires that the Museum's special events coordinator will be an integral partner in all phases of the planning process as well as a resource for assistance. A designated Special Events Coordinator has final approval over all aspects of the event and will work directly with a single point of contact with the participating corporation or organization.

All special events at the National Museum of Natural History are co-hosted by the Museum and the corporation or organization. The Director of the Museum or his designee acts as the co-host of the special event.

If remarks are planned, the Museum reserves the right to have the Director of the Museum or his designee deliver welcoming remarks as the initial speaker. A copy of the invitation list from the organization may be required prior to the distribution of the invitation. A list of guests attending the event may also be required prior to the event.

All printed and web-based materials related to the event must be approved by the Museum's special events coordinator. This includes save-the-date notices, invitation copy, printed programs, website notices, and press releases. The name of the Museum and of the Smithsonian Institution may not be used on any document without prior approval by the Museum.

Since all events are co-hosted by the Museum, invitations to special events are issued jointly from the Director of the Museum and the ranking official of the outside corporation or organization. Any use of logos or trademarks must be approved in advance. If the logo of a corporation or organization is used on the invitation, the Museum's logo must also be used (at approximately the same size). Other uses of logos at the event itself must be approved by the Museum's special event coordinator.

All press kits, other literature, gifts or mementos of the event which the organization may wish to distribute must be approved in advance by the Museum.

Any video or film that the organization may wish to show during the event must be submitted to the Museum in advance for approval.

Arrangements for press and/or broadcast media coverage of an event must be handled in conjunction with, and approved by, the Museum.

Fire regulations prohibit the use of lit candles other than votive candles on tables. Use of propane equipment by a caterer is not permitted in the Museum.

Caterers working within the Museum must have the proper \$1 million liability insurance certificate on file at the Smithsonian. Although co-sponsors may work with the caterer of their choice, the Museum reserves the right to review and approve the choice of caterer in order to assure that they are capable of working safely within the Museum and are aware of the catering limitations within the building. The Museum's special events staff can also provide a list of caterers who have successfully handled events in the Museum.

If official government or diplomatic dignitaries are attending the event, the Museum reserves the right to determine the appropriate protocol for greeting and handling of these guests while at the Museum. The Special Events Office should be notified as soon as possible if dignitaries are expected to attend the event.

The outside organization or corporation shall indemnify and hold harmless the United States and the Smithsonian Institution, their agents and employees, against any and all damages, claims, or other liability due to personal injury or death, or damage to or loss of the property of others, arising out of its use of the National Museum of Natural History.

## **FORCE MAJEURE, CANCELED EVENTS, RESCHEDULED EVENTS AND REFUNDS**

If at any time during the term of the Memorandum of Agreement a cause or causes beyond the reasonable control of the parties hereto (including but not limited to disaster, act of God, government regulations, war, terrorism or threats of terrorism, civil disorder, labor trouble, strikes, curtailment of transportation facilities, unusually severe weather conditions, fire or casualty, mechanical difficulty, or any other emergency), make it illegal, impossible, or inadvisable by formal advice of a chief government officer (e.g., declaration of a state of emergency by a mayor, governor, president) for the donor to conduct the event at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History or for the majority of guests to attend the event, the organization may postpone such event without penalty. If an event must be canceled, the event may be rescheduled for a mutually convenient date.

The failure of either party to perform any of its covenants or agreements shall not be deemed to be a breach or violation of the terms of the Memorandum of Agreement if such failure is due to a cause or causes described in this section.

Deposits made to the Museum to secure dates for a special event are not refundable. Contributions made to the Museum are also non-refundable.

## **BAIRD AUDITORIUM**

Baird Auditorium may be used in conjunction with an event. The facility seats 536 people. In compliance with the fire regulations established by the Smithsonian's Office of Protection Services, this occupancy limit may not be exceeded under any circumstances. Food and drink are not permitted in the auditorium. Additional audiovisual service charges apply.