

**March 18, 2019**  
**Senate State Affairs**

Good morning madam chairman and committee members, I am pleased to be here this morning with Dr. Gloria Totoricagüena to present a report on our Idaho State Museum and its impact.

On October 18, 2018, the country's newest state museum reopened, 68 years after the first Julia Davis Park facility greeted visitors in 1950.

Our vision was to create a new state museum that would be a fun, interactive learning experience where people of all ages and backgrounds could explore the story of Idaho.

To realize the museums' renovation, expansion and educational impact goal for 15,000 feet of world-class exhibitions, we had to concurrently achieve key project elements.

This work included architectural design, permitting, engineering, and construction;

exhibition and multi-media planning, design, fabrication, and installation; interpretive planning and creation of a comprehensive storyline narrative for exhibition content; storyline testing, to ensure the story of Idaho—told in its capital—would resonate across the state. We needed to secure public financing and undertake our first major private fundraising capital campaign; we exceeded our commitment to the Governor and Legislature by raising \$4.3 million in private funds.

We had to move out old exhibits and hundreds of artifacts—a task completed with staff and mountain home air force base volunteers at a \$900,000 cost savings to Idaho's taxpayers. And we had to make the museum an agency-wide initiative- state museum, state archives, state historic preservation office, historic sites, administration- so all expertise could be brought to bear on the telling Idaho's story.

We had ongoing consultations with Idaho's tribes to create authentic and respectful content; established a business plan to maximize our investment and ensure long-term fiscal sustainability; and designed a museum retail store.

At the same time, our staff selected, conserved, and prepared artifacts and photographs; developed a broad education program plan, connecting Idaho curriculum priorities to the museum experience; and created an outreach strategy, including a digitization textile initiative, to connect the museum to Idaho and the world. Finally, we had to prepare for re-launch, including branding, agency-wide customer service training, and re-opening festivities.

We realized that the opportunity to create a new Idaho State Museum would be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reimagine how to have Idaho's story resonate across our state.

To achieve that, we established outcomes that would guide the project's development, including:

- Deepening Idahoans' connection to their state and build a statewide sense of community;
- Creating an essential resource for education and lifelong learning; and
- Contributing to the economic vitality of our state.

To attain intended outcomes, we conceived and executed museum planning with vision and precision to create an impactful visitor experience and maximize the museum's role in applied, informal, and lifelong learning.

To shape exhibition content, we created an inclusive system of community engagement, including focus groups, electronic surveys, workshops, and small group meetings. We collaborated with 70 university academics and local scholars across Idaho. Wherever possible, we connected stories from Idaho's past to the present,

providing vital context to the interpretation. And, we reflected Idaho's diversity throughout the exhibition experience.

We conducted a formal storyline testing process in 2015 and 2016. Nearly 150 Idahoans in nine focus groups from across our state, representing diverse interests and Idaho's education community, gave input. This data was used to create the final storyline and design.

Today, visitors experience 36 distinct exhibitions, enjoy over 46 multimedia programs, view nearly 900 photos, and discover over 500 artifacts. The project employed more than 100 designers, artisans, and craftspeople, as well as more than 31 Idaho-owned businesses and suppliers.

**Walk through slides here!**

Our commitment to working closely with Idaho's federally recognized tribes to co-create tribal content and present an authentic understanding of the role that tribes have always played in Idaho was recognized nationally by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The Idaho State Historical Society received one of 10 national Public Humanities Project Grants in 2018, in the amount of \$400,000, for the scholarship in and engagement demonstrated through our close tribal partnership and exhibition development.

The Idaho State Museum is the culmination of years of statewide planning and visioning. Our goal was to create an essential resource for education and lifelong learning, an economic asset, and a place of inspiration.

To date, we are on track to achieve visitation of 155,000 annually; our revenues are in

alignment with our business plan; and we have earned nearly \$600,000 in media coverage since opening.

But most importantly, we know what people are learning; where they are coming from, what they are feeling; and what they would like in the future. ISHS is positioned to invest public and private resources at their highest level of efficiency, while meeting the expectations of Idahoans, visitors to this great state, and our broad and devoted base of stakeholders and donors.

I am delighted that Dr. G is here today to present the results of our formal survey process and data.

Submitted: Janet L. Gallimore