THE LAKE PLACID OLYMPIC MUSEUM

Olympic City: Lake Placid
Country: United States of America
Edition of the Games:
1932 and 1980 Olympic Winter Games

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

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The Lake Placid Olympic Museum is a public amenity dedicated to showcasing the City's rich Olympic and winter sports heritage.

The Museum is predominantly focused on displays relating to the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympic Games which were held at Lake Placid. It is based at the Olympic Centre which was the central venue for both editions of the Games held in the City.

The Museum contains key artefacts, media extracts and activities designed to bring the experience of these Games to life for visitors. The Museum also places a strong emphasis on promoting the values of Olympism amongst the local population. It organises a host of educational and cultural activities throughout the year, such as the Family Craft Programme, a free family event held once per year. It also welcomes many local sporting events such as the Lake Placid Ironman so that they can benefit from the inspirational surroundings and the platform the Museum provides.

The Museum is the product of close collaboration between the City of Lake Placid and the New York Olympic Regional Development Authority. There is a constant dialogue between the Lake Placid Olympic Museum and the main Olympic Museum in Lausanne, home of the International Olympic Committee. A long established partnership with local media in the City has also been instrumental to the success, informing and promoting local residents about the Museum and its current offerings.

Since opening in 1994, the Lake Placid Olympic Museum has gone from strength to strength. As one of the only Olympic Museum's in the United States, each year they welcome up to 35,000 visitors through its doors. It is an established Lake Placid institution and is both a source of local pride, as well as being an important driver of tourism from outside the City.
OBJECTIVES

Celebrate Olympism and its values

The Spirit of Olympism and the values inherently associated with it have been crafted and developed over more than a century. These values are inextricably linked to the history and heritage of the Olympic Games and the Museum is the physical manifestation of this heritage and these values. As a result, all of the initiatives undertaken by the Museum connect back to this. This includes the exhibitions on display but also extends to the monthly Olympic History segment in the local newspaper and the various community activities run throughout the year.

Promote the City by leveraging its affiliation with the Olympic Movement

Lake Placid is one of only three cities to have the honour of having hosted the Winter Olympic Games on more than one occasion. However, Lake Placid is out on its own in terms of the length of time between both editions hosted. This brings with it the sense that the City is connected to both the modern, vibrant aspect of the Winter Olympic Games, as well as the historic, fabled legacy of their origins. The combination of both these factors is a huge asset for the Museum who are able to showcase a range of artefacts and exhibitions covering both distinct eras.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Internal & External Stakeholders

The City of Lake Placid
The New York State Olympic Regional Development Authority
1980 Winter Games employees and volunteers
Local media
The Olympic Museum Lausanne
Local community stakeholders

Finance and Cost

The not-for-profit museum currently has a contract with the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) to provide annual operating costs ($150,000) to the museum to showcase its collections and exhibits in the Lake Placid Olympic Center and in return they receive all admission sales. Admission to the museum is $7 US for adults, $5 US for students and seniors. The ticket sales pay for the salaries of three employees, their benefits, and the museum’s utilities. The operating costs to the museum are minimal and the museum board focuses its financial resources ($50,000) on exhibiting the collections, their care and preservation, and the
educational programs the museum creates. Additional funding is provided through local foundations and state agencies to assist with special projects.

Use of the Olympic Brand
The official logo of the Olympic Museum contains the Olympic Rings and so all branding onsite, official communications and promotional material enjoys the benefit of associating with the Olympic brand.

Human Resources and Time
The museum is fully staffed and is open 7 days week from 10am to 5pm all year round. On the day of the Family Craft Programme, an additional 6 persons are employed to help with the delivery of the event.

EVALUATION
The success of the Olympic Museum is evaluated on mixed formal and informal basis. There is some focus centred on the numbers of visitors per year, but softer measures such as stakeholder and community focus groups, media coverage and casual feedback from visitors as they leave are also weighted heavily when gauging the value and direction of the Museum.

KEY CHALLENGES
Working with limited resources
Despite being a two-time Olympic host and the home to the only Olympic Museum in the U.S., Lake Placid is still a very small community with a small number of residents. The Museum can only call on a small number of staff to help run the day-to-day operations, as well deliver various events. This often means that different staff are charged with numerous tasks and responsibilities, often very different to their core role. This creates a challenge in terms of time as well as expertise.

The Museum tries, where possible, to clearly delegate similar tasks and responsibilities to the same individuals. This involves taking into consideration the core job roles of these individuals and aligning these tasks to the core competencies of each staff member.

Remembering earlier Games
While the 1980 Games remain fresh in the memory of most residents, the first Lake Placid Games in 1932 took place in a very different era to today. As a result, there is a significant imbalance between the content available between the two editions of the Games. Almost all of the employees and athletes that participated at the event are deceased, television coverage had not yet arrived and many of the countries that successfully competed no longer exist.
The silver lining of this situation is that any material related to the 1932 Games is even more interesting as a result of its rarity. The artefacts from the first Lake Placid Games are among the most prized by the Museum and visitors alike. The generosity of donors, as well as the continuous support of the Olympic Museum in Lausanne has helped to bring bygone these eras back to life.

KEY LEARNINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Interact with the community

As a small, tight-knit community, a large degree of importance is placed on the input and feedback of local stakeholders and interest groups. Many of the concepts for expositions and activities are based on ideas generated by small focus groups made up from key members of the community. Continuous feedback from residents about how the Museum can better service the local community is a central part of the overall strategy and vision of leadership.

Use media as an educational tool

One of the core responsibilities of the Museum is to educate the community on the region's Olympic history. This was confirmed by local community stakeholders through various focus groups which also generated the idea of running a regular feature in local media to help achieve this. This resulted in the production of the "Olympic History" section in Lake Placid News, a local newspaper in the City. This feature is run on a monthly basis and is produced by the Museum in partnership with the news outlet. It includes specialist articles, flashbacks, information on upcoming events and in-depth interviews, all with an emphasis on local education. The articles are also released online, opening them up to people from all over the world and teaching them about the rich Olympic heritage of Lake Placid.

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