

Standing Committee for the Museum Definition Advisory Council Report

Introduction:

In 2019, the ICOM Extraordinary General Assembly held in Kyoto approved to postpone the vote on a new museum definition, deciding to enter into a process of consultation and improved cooperation between committees. Since then, committees around the world have led activities of consultation with their members. In December 2019, the Executive Board decided to expand the MDPP to include over 20 members, incorporating figures who represent varying opinions on the matter. In February 2020, with the committee renamed MDPP2 to reflect the change, members entered into a phase of establishing a new methodology for proposing a museum definition for the 21st Century. This process has had to take into consideration the specificities of different regions and specializations represented by the many ICOM committees, regional alliances and affiliated organizations.

Diverging views within MDPP2 and ICOM leaders regarding the methodology led to the resignation of the committee chair and six MDPP2 members, which brought the standing committees' work to a halt for a period of time. At the end of August 2020, the remaining MDPP2 members were called to a meeting with the Executive Board to discuss a way forward. It was felt necessary to expand the MDPP2 to cover regions and specializations currently not included by the members. As a result of this concern, the EB named new members and the standing committee at present has 20 members.¹

Aiming to respond to the need for a democratic and open process of consultation to the National Committees, International Committees, Regional Alliances and Affiliated Organizations that constitute ICOM, a Working Group was appointed within the MDPP2 in September 2020 to formulate a **new methodology going forward**. Based on our different backgrounds and experiences in the museum field, we have reached a methodology that was approved by the MDPP2 on October 19, and by the ICOM Executive Board on October 30, 2020. The design of this methodology is based on greater transparency, as well as the careful listening to all proposals. At this point, members of MDPP2 agreed that a change in the name would be advisable and it was requested to the ICOM leadership that the new name be **ICOM Define: Standing Committee for the Museum Definition**.

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The new configuration of MDPP2 after October 2020 is as follows:

Co-Chairs: Laurant BONILLA-MERCHAV (Costa Rica); Bruno BRULON (Brazil)
Members: Yaarob Alabdullah (Syria), Chedlia ANNABI (Tunisia), Ralf ČEPLAK MENCIN (Slovenia), Inkyung CHANG (South Korea), Luisa DE PEÑA DÍAZ (Dominican Republic), David FLEMING (United Kingdom), Nava KESSLER (Israel), Nicolas KRAMAR (Switzerland), Ana Maria Theresa LABRADOR (Philippines), Marie LALONDE (Canada), Diana PARDUE (United States), Juliette RAOUL DUVAL (France), Marie-Clarté O'Neill (France), Kristiane STRÆTKVERN (Denmark), Muthoni THANGWA (Kenya), Beverley THOMAS (South Africa), Mathew TRINCA (Australia), Elizabeth Varner (USA)
Ex-officio: Alberto GARLANDINI (Italy) (President of ICOM)

Methodology Working group members: Annabi, Bonilla-Merchav, Brulon, Chang, Kessler, Pardue, Raoul Duval

ICOM Define recognizes the vast work done by the MDPP and the various committees who have dedicated an interest to the issue of the museum definition. We have listened to the criticisms and evaluated the steps taken to improve upon them, and are now animated by a spirit of optimism that harnesses a vision of change necessary to face the challenges of museums at present. The new process, based on innovative ways of participation, invites members and committees to engage in the elaboration of a new museum definition, and its success largely depends on the involvement of the greatest number of committees possible.

Museum Definition: A way forward

The approved methodology, greatly based on the expressed need for consultation, moves towards a new phase of this process, aiming to arrive at the next ICOM General Conference in 2022 with a museum definition proposal to be submitted for a vote. The methodology is based on **4 rounds of consultation**, divided into **11 steps** with a duration of **18 months**. The proposed schedule begins on December 10, 2020 and ends in early May 2022, but may be adjusted depending on the circumstances. Committees will be informed from the outset of the entire process and results will be published periodically and made available for the membership in Member Space.

To support committees and their membership in the multiple steps of consultation, a “Museum Definition” space has been created within the ICOM Member Space website, where it is possible for members to consult all the documents related to the Museum Definition reformulation project, including all documents produced by the MDPP, as well as the reports of surveys and activities conducted by several committees since Kyoto 2019. ICOM Define encourages members and committees to review all of these documents, as well as the previous museum definition proposals, and the ICOM Code of Ethics and Statutes when considering their responses.

ICOM Define is committed to open communication with committees during the entire process and its members will be available if and when needed. If a committee needs more detailed information regarding the methodology itself, ICOM Define can assist to explain at all stages of the process. The standing committee feels it is also necessary to periodically encourage members to be in touch with their committees and to send their suggestions, thereby aiding committees in gathering the voices of their constituents.

The methodology

On December 10, 2020 ICOM Define launched the methodology in a public webinar “Defining the museum in times of change: a way forward”. Committee chairs were invited to the zoom session, thereby permitting their direct consultation, and wider membership was invited via the Yucca streaming platform. Also, at this time, the Museum Definition website within Member Space was launched. The webinar described the various stages of the methodology and warmly welcomed questions and comments from the audience. Co-chairs also encouraged members and committee representatives to engage actively in the process of creating a new museum definition proposal.

The following is the entire approved methodology for consultation and formulation of **a new museum definition proposal**. Members and committees should be aware of all steps in the process and how

ICOM Define will be handling the data received from each phase of consultation. Dates are provided so that committees can arrange, well in advance, the activities they must coordinate for consultation of their constituents. For each step of the consultation they will be receiving official communication from the Secretariat with instructions and deadlines for submitting their responses. Throughout the entire process, committees have the liberty to create their own procedures of consultation with their membership, to thereby fulfill each step of the methodology. ICOM Define can assist, but will not specify the manner in which membership should be consulted. We encourage committees to hold their own meetings/webinars with their members to discuss each step.

It is important to point out that committees can submit all consultation responses in any of the three official languages, and that all published reports and results will be officially translated as well, with review by ICOM Define members.

- **STEP 1: MDPP2 Launch of methodology** [10 Dec. 2020]
 - Webinar to present the methodology – Day 1
 - Launch of Museum Definition page within Member Space website.

- **STEP 2: Consultation 1 - Results of discussions and reports of activities post Kyoto** – 1 month [10 Dec. 2020 – 10 Jan. 2021]
 - We request all committees to send the Secretariat their work conducted up to this date that relates to the museum definition, even those who have already sent it in. The main goal of this step is for Committees to submit what they have developed in the past year.
 - We request that they preface their reports with a brief abstract that contains the main terms of their discussions (not more than 100 words).
 - All documents received will be published in the Members Space section online.

- **STEP 3: Consultation 2 – Suggesting Key words/concepts: What should be part of the new museum definition?** – 3 months [10 Jan. 2021 – 10 Apr. 2021]
 - Committees are requested to submit a maximum of 20 key words or concepts (ideas, terms, phrases, etc.) and their descriptions for what a new museum definition needs to contain. Responses are sent via online form by the chairs of each committee based on their consultation with membership.

- **STEP 4: Quantitative and qualitative analysis of Consultation 2** – 2 months [10 Apr. 2021 – 10 June 2021]
 - Budget has been requested to finance external analysis
 - Analysis will be supervised by ICOM Define: A subcommittee (3-4 representatives from MDPP2) will be created to assess the analysis.

- **STEP 5: Preparation and Publication of Consultation 2 Results** – 1 month [10 Jun. – 10 Jul. 2021]

- Results appear in the form of a list/conceptual map/table of key words and concepts, with supporting quantitative data, and will be accompanied by a more complete report.
- **STEP 6: Consultation 3 – Evaluation of Key words/concepts – 2 months**
[10 Jul. 2021 – 10 Sept. 2021]
 - Committees work with membership to review the list of key words and concepts published in Consultation 2 results and submit their feedback.
 - Each committee fills out an online form, which allows them to evaluate the key words/concepts. They will be asked to signal support, the need for amendments, and/or additions to the list provided. Form allows committees to add up to 3 new key words/concepts they feel are missing and also permits them to comment on key words/concepts that they can't accept.
- **STEP 7: Data analysis of Consultation 3 - 2 months** [10 Sept. 2021 – 10 Nov. 2021]
 - Elaboration/compilation of a final list of key words/concepts based on Consultation 3 results, including quantitative data.
- **STEP 8: ICOM Define drafts proposals – 1 month** [10 Nov. – 10 Dec. 2021]
 - In groups of 3, ICOM Define members will submit 2 proposed definitions each based on the results of Consultation 3, yielding approximately 14 proposals.
- **STEP 9: ICOM Define Discussion on proposals – 2 months** [10 Dec. 2021 – 10 Feb. 2022]
 - ICOM Define will aim to merge proposals ideally to 8-10 and then select +/- 5 proposals for publication.
- **STEP 10: Consultation 4 - Publication of proposals– 2 months** [10 Feb. 2022 – 10 Apr. 2022]
 - Publication of +/- 5 proposals in Member Space.
 - Committees consult their members regarding the published definition proposals.
 - Committees are requested to identify their preferred proposals in an online form.
- **STEP 11: ICOM Define final report– 1 month** [10 Apr. – 10 May 2022]
 - Based on results of Consultation 4, ICOM Define submits museum definition proposal to the EB along with the final report, in due time for review.
 - ICOM Define requests EB review, approval and publication of the museum definition proposal at least two months in advance of EGA (ICOM Prague 2022, Aug. 20-27).