



USE OF SMITHSONIAN FACILITIES FOR SPECIAL EVENTS, PUBLIC PROGRAMS, RENTALS AND FEDERAL USE

1. Purpose	1
2. Background	1
3. Definitions	1
4. Policy	3
5. Responsibilities	6
6. Scope of Policy	7

[Attachment A: Facility-Specific Policy Template](#)

1. PURPOSE

The Smithsonian's buildings and grounds are unique resources that are used by the Smithsonian to provide the visiting public with access to exhibits, programs, collections, and research, and to protect Smithsonian collections. This directive establishes policies applicable to the use of Smithsonian Institution facilities for special events, public programs, rentals, and use by federal entities. It establishes principles for prioritizing use of spaces for such events, and assigns responsibilities for managing special events, public programs, rentals, and federal use within the Institution.

2. BACKGROUND

This directive supersedes the version of SD 401 issued on August 29, 2006. It incorporates the basic principles and guidelines for Smithsonian facility use, clarifies the distinctions between Smithsonian special events and public programs, rentals, and federal use, and establishes guidelines applicable to each category.

3. DEFINITIONS

Special Events: Smithsonian-sponsored gatherings or activities intended for a targeted audience occurring on Smithsonian Institution property or facilities. Examples include meetings of the Board of Regents and advisory boards; development/membership/cultivation opportunities; exhibition or facility openings; and events for staff, including award ceremonies,

3. DEFINITIONS (continued)

appreciation events, and holiday celebrations.

Public Programs: Smithsonian-sponsored gatherings and activities that are open to the public, whether or not a ticket is required. Examples include educational programs, films, lectures, tours, conferences, family days, and festivals.

Co-sponsored Special Events or Public Programs: Special Events or Public Programs organized by the Smithsonian with a non-Smithsonian organization that has a programmatic connection to the Smithsonian mission and its collections, research, or activities.

Co-sponsor: A non-Smithsonian organization with a programmatic connection to a Special Event or Public Program that is supporting the event or program with expertise, money, personnel, or other resources.

Host Facility: The Smithsonian facility in which a Special Event, Public Program, Rental, or Federal Use is being held.

Sponsoring Unit: The Smithsonian museum, research center, or unit that sponsors or proposes to sponsor a Special Event or Public Program (with or without a Co-sponsor), regardless of the facility in which it is held.

Licensee: An external (non-Smithsonian) organization or individual that is renting space from the Smithsonian for a private event.

Rental: A private event at the Smithsonian that is organized by a Licensee.

Federal Use: Meetings or activities at the Smithsonian that are organized by a federal entity, other than the Smithsonian. Federal Use includes official Presidential Inaugural activities.

Special Events Policy Committee: A committee comprised of:

- Chief of Staff to the Secretary;
- Director, Office of Special Events and Protocol (OSEP), Chair;
- Designated representative of the Chief Operating Officer/Under Secretary for Finance and Administration (COO/USF&A);
- Designated representative of the Provost;
- Designated representative of the Office of Communications and External Affairs;
- Designated representative of the Office of Advancement;
- Designated representative of the Office of Government Relations;
- Designated unit Special Events Coordinator, on a two-year rotating basis;
- Of counsel: Designated representative of the Office of General Counsel; and

3. DEFINITIONS (continued)

- Representative of Sponsoring Unit and Host Facility of the special event under discussion.

Smithsonian Filming Committee: The committee organized by the Office of Public Affairs to review requests for filming at the Smithsonian.

4. POLICY

A. Goals

The Smithsonian hosts Special Events and Public Programs and makes space available for Rentals and Federal Use within its facilities to further its mission by advancing one or more of the following goals:

- a. Widening public understanding of the Institution's collections and research;
- b. Promoting knowledge of art, design, science, technology, history, and culture;
- c. Acknowledging or supporting employees and affiliated staff;
- d. Recognizing donors, and cultivating potential donors and collectors;
- e. Attracting new audiences to the Smithsonian; or
- f. Raising revenue in support of the Smithsonian's mission.

B. Priority of Uses

To achieve the goals of the policy, all facilities are, first and foremost, to be used for the benefit of the Smithsonian and in a cooperative and collegial manner among units. To that end, Host Facility directors and Sponsoring Unit directors of units that do not have facilities suitable for events (for example, Smithsonian Associates, Smithsonian Latino Center, the Asian Pacific-American Center, the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage) should establish mechanisms for reserving spaces and fairly allocating costs.

In making space available for Special Events, Public Programs, Rentals, and Federal Uses, directors of Host Facilities should prioritize Smithsonian Special Events and Programs before Rentals and Federal Uses, taking into account potential impacts of proposed events on the following:

- a. Public access to the facilities, including access to Public Programs;
- b. Public safety;

4. POLICY (continued)

- c. Regular unit operations, including maintenance, research, and care of living collections;
- d. Protection of the collections;
- e. Staff resources; and
- f. Wear and tear on facilities.

C. Rental Types

The Smithsonian may rent certain spaces within its facilities for private corporate receptions, such as cocktail or dinner parties. In addition to private corporate receptions, Host Facility directors, at their discretion, may rent space for the following types of private events on a category-by-category basis:

- a. Fundraising galas for non-profit organizations with 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, including religious organizations;
- b. Business meetings in non-public spaces, such as conference rooms;
- c. Personal social events for adults such as wedding receptions, memorials, anniversary celebrations, and birthday parties; and
- d. Social events for teens and children; for example, bar/bat mitzvah receptions (not ceremonies), quinceañeras, prom parties, etc.

Facilities shall not be rented for events that are open to the public.

Host Facility directors will determine which, if any, spaces are available for Rentals, how often spaces will be made available, and which categories of Rental activities they will allow based on the factors described in subsection B. All Rentals will be subject to the terms and conditions of the rental agreement, which will require appropriate insurance of Licensees and their vendors.

D. Federal Uses

Taking into account the factors in subsection B, Host Facility directors may make space available for federal entities to hold events for free or for an appropriate fee. Although federal entities may use Smithsonian facilities, no events will be permitted that announce, promote, or advocate policy initiatives not related to the Smithsonian.

Presidential Inaugural Committee activities may be authorized as a Federal Use.

4. POLICY (continued)

E. Unacceptable Types of Activities

No Special Event, Public Program, Rental, or Federal Use may:

- a. include political activities, including solicitations for candidates; campaign kick offs, or other activities directed toward the success or failure of a partisan candidate, political party, or partisan political group;
- b. violate any federal or local law regarding the sale of alcoholic beverages or other restricted substances; or
- c. include sales of non-Smithsonian products or services.

Sales of books or other merchandise related to the Special Events and Public Programs may be conducted by the Smithsonian Associates, Friends of the National Zoo (FONZ), Smithsonian Enterprises or through a concession agreement. Other displays of products at Public Programs and Special Events, such as those of a corporate sponsor, are governed by [SD 809, Philanthropic Support](#). In the context of Rentals only, Licensees may display products or product lines at their private events.

F. Unacceptable Rental Activities

In addition to the prohibited activities listed in subsection E above, the following activities are not permissible in Rentals:

- a. Gambling;
- b. Religious or civil ceremonies (other than those incidental to a wedding Rental); and
- c. Solicitations by for-profit entities (for example, ticketed events advertised to the general public).

G. Facility-Specific Policies

Using the template in [Attachment A](#), each Host Facility shall develop a facility-specific policy consistent with this SD that: (1) identifies categories of Rental or Federal Use the director chooses to authorize; (2) identifies spaces within the Host Facility available for such uses; (3) describes facility-specific operational requirements or restrictions; and (4) establishes Rental fees for each identified space. Each policy must be reviewed and approved by the Special Events Policy Committee, or its designees, to ensure consistency with this SD prior to issuance.

4. POLICY (continued)

H. Filming

Filming at the Smithsonian is subject to the procedures and criteria established by the Smithsonian Filming Committee. Requests for filming should be made through the Smithsonian Office of Public Affairs (<https://newsdesk.si.edu/filming-requests>).

Exceptions. A filming request is not needed for filming during a Rental or Federal Use so long as (1) the recording will be used only for personal, non-commercial, or internal corporate use, and (2) any appearance of Smithsonian names, logos, staff, collections, iconic Smithsonian locations, or other identifiable Smithsonian content in the footage is background and incidental in the generated footage.

Still photography also is permitted during a Rental or Federal Use for personal, non-commercial or internal corporate use. Other uses of still photography must be approved through a negotiated license. Contact the Office of Contracting for assistance.

The foregoing restrictions shall be reflected in rental applications and agreements. Host Facility directors should identify areas where such filming may occur during Rental events.

Filming for Smithsonian internal purposes only does not require a filming request. If there is potential for the Smithsonian to use the recording externally, please consult the Smithsonian Filming Committee.

I. Limitations

The Smithsonian reserves the right to decline or impose limits upon any proposed Rental or Federal Use, or to deny the continued use of a Smithsonian space, if at any time it appears that the event in whole or part imposes undue risk to the safety, security, or good condition of the collections, facilities, staff, or other Smithsonian resource. The Smithsonian further reserves the right to deny the use of its facilities to any person or organization at any time who does not comply with this SD, a Host Facility's facility-specific policy, or the terms and conditions of the rental agreement. Decisions of the Secretary regarding interpretation of this policy and its application to a particular use shall be final.

5. RESPONSIBILITIES

Directors of Host Facilities: The director of each Host Facility is responsible for developing a facility-specific policy based on the template for Special Events, Public Programs, Rentals and

5. RESPONSIBILITIES (continued)

Federal Uses occurring at the Host Facility that will supplement and be consistent with this policy. The director of each Host Facility is responsible for complying with this SD in making space available. Directors may delegate some or all of these responsibilities to appropriate employees.

Directors of Sponsoring Units: The director of the Sponsoring Unit is responsible for the Special Events and Public Programs it sponsors, and for planning the content of such events and programs consistent with other directives, including [SD 603, Exhibition and Program Planning](#). For Co-sponsored Special Events or Public Programs, Sponsoring Units will enter into appropriate agreements, such as Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), contracts, or grants, establishing the responsibilities of the Co-Sponsor.

Office of General Counsel: The OGC is responsible for providing legal advice to the Institution and providing legal review for MOUs, sponsorship, and Rental agreements.

Office of Special Events and Protocol: OSEP is responsible for advising on compliance with this SD.

Office of Risk Management: The ORM is responsible for advising on insurance requirements and risk management needs for events and programs.

Licensees: Licensees are responsible for complying with this SD, Host Facility facility-specific policies, and the terms and conditions of the Rental agreement.

Co-sponsors collaborating with the Smithsonian on a Smithsonian Co-sponsored Special Event shall comply with any applicable agreement, law, and policies.

Office of Public Affairs: The OPA facilitates filming requests directed to the Smithsonian Filming Committee for review and approval.

Special Events Policy Committee: The Special Events Policy committee will provide advice on any policy issues that may arise, review Host Facility facility-specific policies for consistency with this SD, and recommend appropriate action related to this SD to the Secretary.

Smithsonian Filming Committee: The Smithsonian Filming Committee will review and advise on requests for filming at the Smithsonian.

6. SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy governs all events and programs occurring at the Smithsonian and applies to all Smithsonian employees, volunteers, and contractors, the Friends of the National Zoo, and the Smithsonian Early Enrichment Center.

SUPERSEDES:	SD 401 issued on August 29, 2006
INQUIRIES:	Office of Special Events and Protocol (OSEP)
RETENTION:	Indefinite. Subject to review for currency 36 months from date of issue.
