

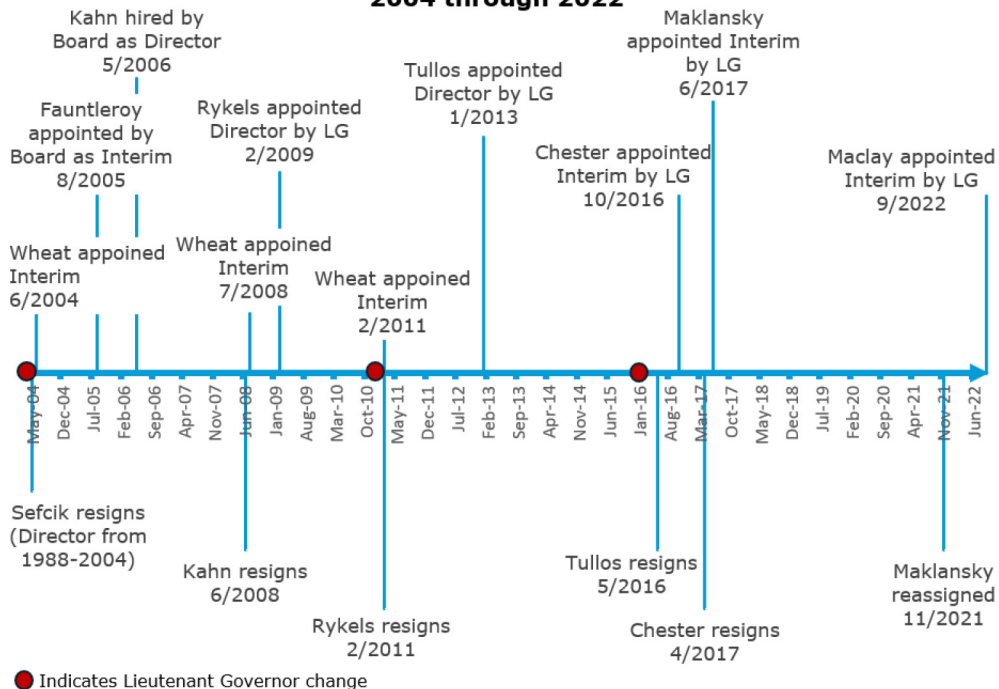
Why We Conducted This Audit

We evaluated the Office of State Museum’s (OSM), also referred to as the Louisiana State Museum (LSM), management of its museum system. OSM is housed within the Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism (CRT), which is led by the Louisiana Lieutenant Governor. We conducted this audit because museums are an important component of preserving and sharing Louisiana’s history, and because organizations such as museums were heavily impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic when travel and indoor activities were limited. This report is second in a series of reports on CRT.

What We Found

- **OSM has not had a permanent Museum Director since May 2016, resulting in a pattern of inconsistent leadership. According to multiple stakeholders, the Museum Director position holds little autonomy and is political in nature due, in part, to the governance structure. The American Alliance of Museums (AAM) states that effective governance and executive leadership are key components of museum accreditation.** According to OSM staff and current/former LSM Board members, turnover and vacancies in the Museum Director position is one of the major challenges facing the museums.

**Museum Director Timeline
2004 through 2022**



● Indicates Lieutenant Governor change

Source: Prepared by legislative auditor’s staff using information from LaGov.

What We Found (Cont.)

- **OSM does not have a comprehensive strategic plan or a detailed budget for the museum system or for exhibits.** Effective planning includes budgeting for museum programs and exhibits and communicating those budgets to the appropriate museum staff. However, OSM does not have a comprehensive plan for exhibits, including exhibit start dates and end dates, and it does not have a clear budget for museum programs and exhibits.
- **Low staffing over several years has led to low employee morale and may affect museum operations.** For example, full-time staff decreased 41.7%, from 108 employees in fiscal year 2009 to 63 in fiscal year 2022. According to 65.2% (30 of 46) of staff survey respondents, staffing cuts are a major challenge for the museum system.
- **OSM could better use data to manage museum operations. OSM does not have accurate visitation data for each museum because it lacks a standard process for calculating and tracking museum admissions and event rentals.** As a result, visitation numbers that OSM maintained internally, as well as those provided to the Division of Administration, were inaccurate. Accurately calculating museum visitation and sources of self-generated revenue is important for OSM to make management decisions and determine what museum initiatives are successful.
- **OSM does not have dedicated resources for museum marketing, including a budget, plan, and specialized staff, which limits its ability to promote the museums to the public.** OSM does not have a dedicated budget or adequate staff, making it difficult for OSM to create cohesive plan for marketing and community engagement. Currently, OSM utilizes some marketing resources through the communications staff of CRT and the Lieutenant Governor's office; however, this process functions more as approvals rather than a strategic vision for promoting the museums.
- **OSM should work to increase fundraising efforts. Strengthening relationships with support organizations could help OSM maximize private funding and grants.** From fiscal year 2018 through fiscal year 2021, support organizations provided \$2.6 million, on average, in support per year to museums, as well as providing supporting services.
- **OSM should strengthen its internal controls over grants and contracts that flow through support organizations. For example, between fiscal years 2020 and 2022, the Jazz Museum expended \$1.5 million in grants and private donations from more than 20 different funding streams, but did not have a clear process to track requirements and deliverables.** Developing a systematic mechanism, such as a spreadsheet, to track the agreements, deliverables, and invoices for these agreements could help ensure that contracts are all completed and deliverables are met appropriately.