

Special thanks to:
Greater Kent Historical Society,
Dylan High, Dr. Lane Eagles, and Hollye
Keister.

Cohesive Collections Planning

Creating Collections Guides for Volunteer-based History Museums



Framing

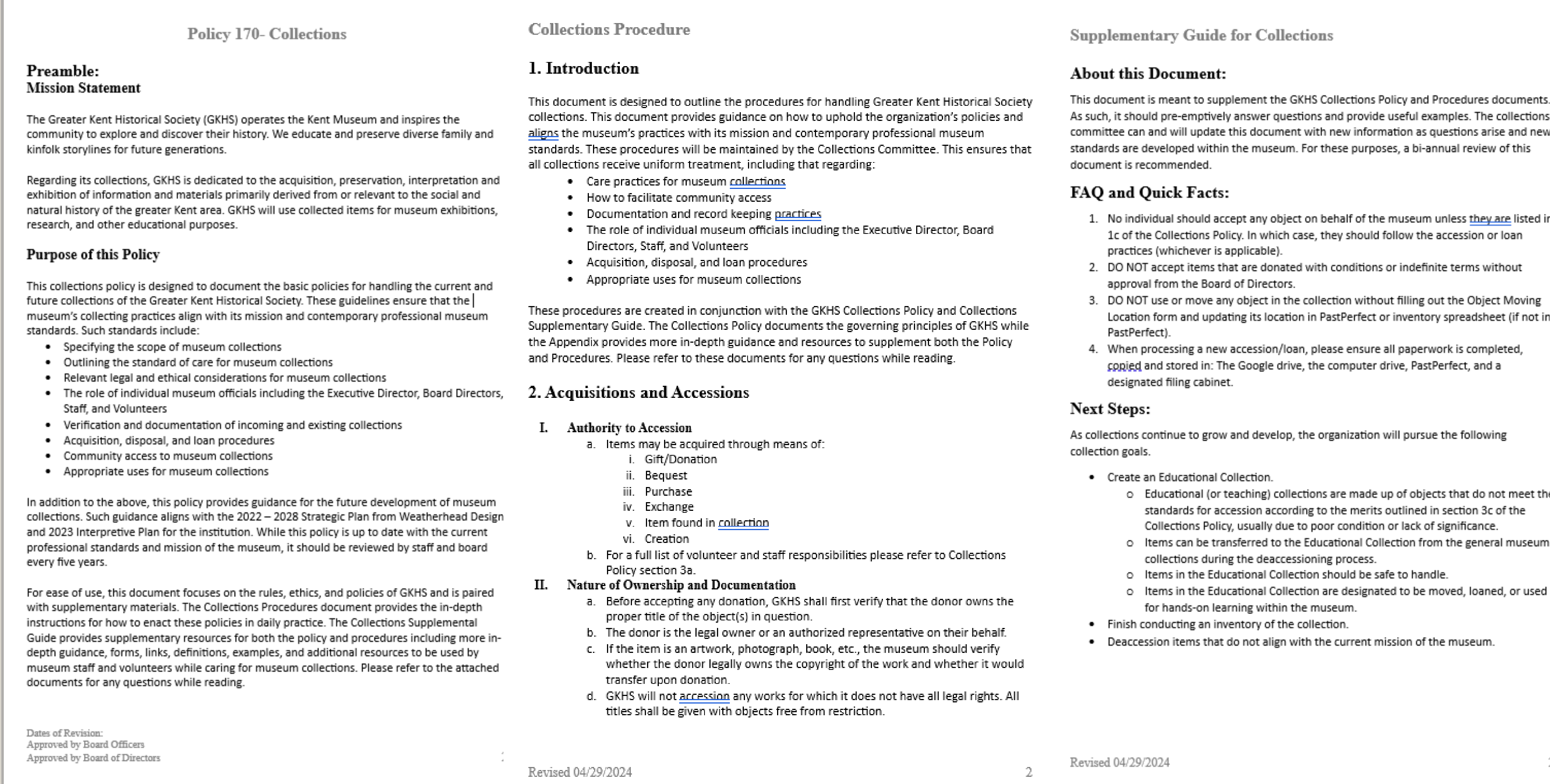
Last summer, I spent eight weeks working as a collection intern at the Greater Kent Historical Society with a fellow intern, the Executive Director, and a team of volunteers. During that time, we ran into many issues and questions surrounding the collections including care, labeling, and paperwork. At this time, we also realized that past decisions had been inconsistent and that many procedures needed to be updated and written down. We decided that a new collections policy would solve many of these problems and could provide structure moving forward.

For the policy, we decided on the following priorities:

1. The policy should serve the updated mission of the museum and be community oriented.
2. The policy has to be volunteer friendly.
3. The policy needs to give volunteers the resources they need to do collections work.
4. Documenting future decisions need to be built in.
5. Visual guides for complex concepts are critical.
6. These goals are better met if the policy is divided into three documents than one long document.

Purpose and Impact

This project is designed to help volunteers and staff maintain consistency in their collections. This consistency will in turn help them execute tasks more easily, communicate regulations with the public, and make future decisions for the collection. These documents are also designed to be easy to update with new information to meet volunteers' needs. While these documents are customized for GKHS, they are designed in a way that could easily be modified for other small, volunteer-run history museums.



The first pages of the Policy, Procedure, and Supplementary Guide, respectively.

Next Steps

GKHS is currently using the rough drafts of the document for guiding accession decisions. The policy will be submitted for board approval in June 2024. In order for the document to remain relevant for GKHS, they should review and update the components as they see fit, at least once every five years.

I have also begun sharing some resources with other history museums and hope it can help them update their own policies in the future. I encourage institutions to read through the documents and customize them for their own use.

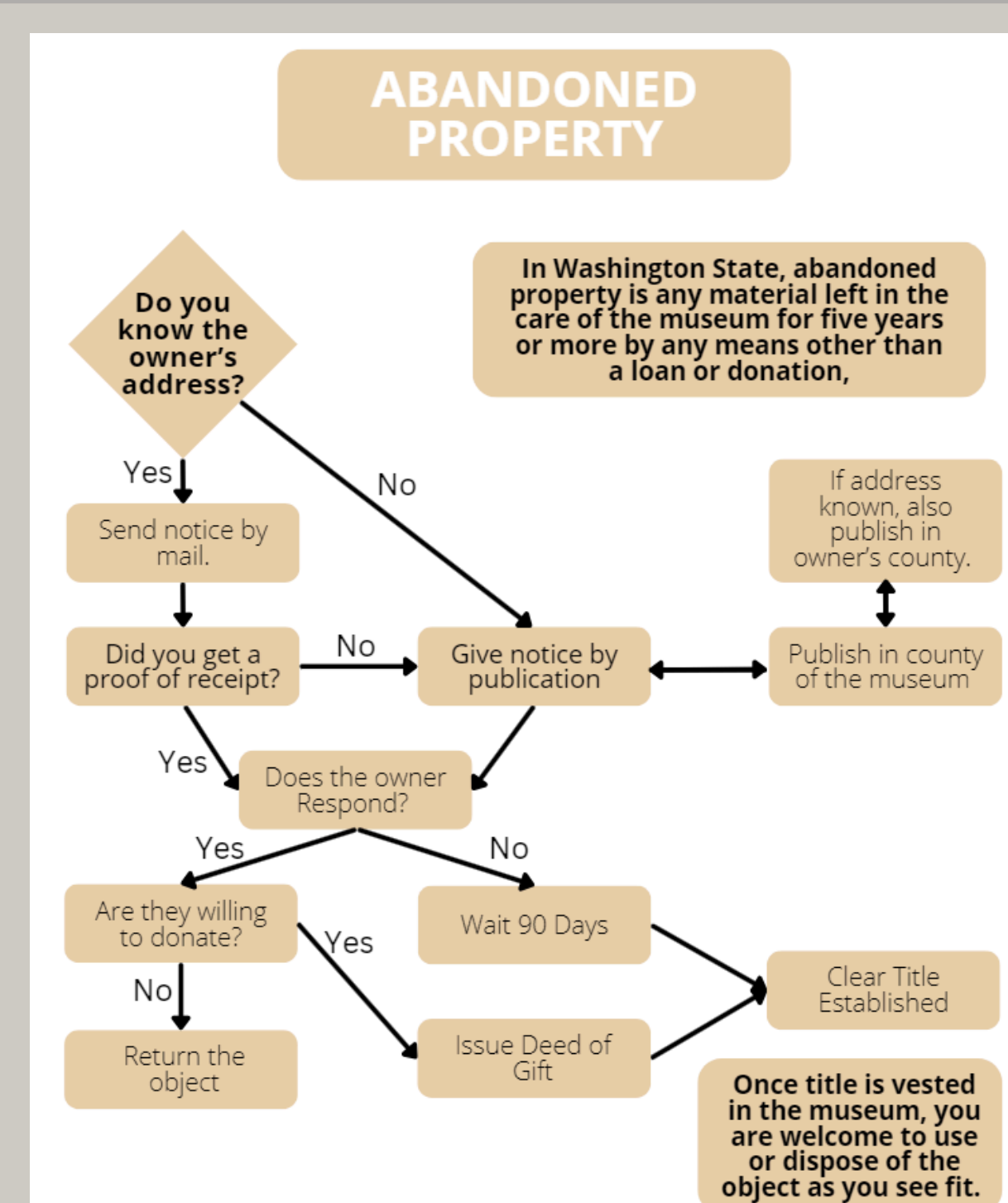
Selected References

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Deliverable

Three inter-connected documents:

- A Collections Policy that outlines the general guidelines for museum collections
- A Collections Procedure that details collections care
- A Supplementary Guide that provides graphical illustrations, forms, and additional resources



One of the diagrams from the Supplementary Guide

Process

- 1 Discussing needs with Dylan and Volunteers
- 2 Researching Best Practices
- 3 Creating an outline and getting feedback
- 4 Writing the first full draft
- 5 Five rounds of feedback from committee and/or volunteers and revisions