

# MUSEUMS MOVING FORWARD

## Best Practices (Preliminary Draft) Recommendations for Implementation of “10 Ways to Move Museums Forward”

2019

This document is grounded in the acknowledgement that museum workplaces for the most part have been built on outdated value systems. Not only are they out of date, these values are often exclusionary and cause unnecessary harm both to individual workers and the institutional culture as a whole. Affecting positive change in museum workplaces thus requires a mix of new policy and cultural education, as well as the establishment of new and updated codes of conduct.

- 1) **ACTION: Commit to programming that represents an equitable picture of society.**
  - a) **Timeline:** Immediate (analysis) and long-term (implementation and reporting). Analysis and report on current state within 6 months. Implementation of and commitment to updated exhibition & programming schedule within 16 months (to continue indefinitely).
  - b) **Steps for implementation:**
    - i) Analysis of programs: Compile data from all programs over the last five years, from the subjects of the programs and types of programs etc. to the demographic data of the audiences that the programs attracted (if available) and the target audiences at the time from a marketing perspective.
    - ii) Analysis of decision-making processes, people, and structure: Evaluate the processes pertaining to exhibitions and programs. Who are the people involved with making decisions on exhibitions and programs? Does the group of decision-makers reflect an equitable picture of the community the institution serves? Who is allowed to submit proposals? How are these proposals reviewed and evaluated? How are curators promoted within the institution? How does the curatorial pipeline work, and what is the process for curatorial hires and mentorship? Evaluate the responses to each of these questions and identify where implicit bias may affect the decision-making process as an exhibition or program goes through inception, review, approval, funding, scheduling, and realization.
    - iii) Share report on programs with the public to ensure accountability for future change.
    - iv)
      1. Make a financial commitment—from the board level—to have equitable allocation of funds for exhibitions and programs that accurately represent today’s society.
      2. Commit to an institutionally feasible time frame for establishing 50% of the exhibition and acquisition budgets being used for exhibitions and acquisitions of art made by women from 1900-forward and artists of color.
      3. Commit to a consistently balanced and equitable presentation of exhibitions dedicated to women and artists of color from 1900-forward.Goal: 2024.

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- v) Allocate funding to compile demographic research about institution's city, county, and greater metropolitan region, as well as demographic data on staff, volunteers, board members, and guests. Work with other institutions and share demographic data. Use this data to further analyze programs from the last five years to identify where changes are needed.
  - vi) Update existing and/or establish new hiring practices and decision-making procedures for exhibitions and programs to eliminate identified blind spots. Train staff on how to eliminate implicit bias in the exhibition process. Reinforce bias-free decision-making. Allocate funding to strengthen cultural competence of staff through training.
  - vii) Review and implement county and city mandates tied to grants/funding.
  - viii) Seek support from foundations already doing this work.
  - ix) Utilize staff, allocated funds, and updated procedures to effectively represent a multiplicity of voices with respect to gender, race, and other typically under-served voices in exhibitions and programs. Engage with and participate in communities more actively. Create open space for under-served youth to see a career in the arts as a possibility through expanded youth programs. Reduce and eliminate barriers of entry to the institution, not just through socio-economic barriers like admission fees but also through languages and didactic materials. Commit to an institution-wide rewriting of wall labels and other interpretation materials that signals to the public the issues of equity at play, using new methodologies and interpretive strategies, including, for example, indicating what it is not in the room as well as what is.
  - x) Speak with colleagues and other institutions that are successfully doing this already.
  - xi) Share second report with public illustrating results (data visualization), the changes/additions that were made, and the process by which the changes were implemented.
- c) Metrics for success:**
- i) By 2024, the public will see a consistently balanced and equitable presentation of exhibitions dedicated to women and artists of color from 1900-forward. Shifts in public programs will be seen by the end of 2021.
  - ii) Public commitment from museum directors to change programming to more accurately reflect an equitable picture of society.
  - iii) A public system to track and measure diversity and equity in programming.
  - iv) Training completed by staff (re: implicit bias and cultural competency).
  - v) Continuous reporting every 3-5 years, reflecting improved results.

**2) ACTION: Commit to Board Diversity.** Commit to reflecting the diversity of museum audiences within institutional leadership. As governance and strategy, as well as key hires, are overseen at a board level, a more

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representative trustee demographic is essential to achieving an equitable and inclusive program, working environment, and staff.

a) **Timeline:** Immediate and ongoing.

b) **Steps for implementation:**

- i) Work closely with other organizations developing frameworks for increasing board diversity, in particular AAM's three-year initiative on this subject, which is backed by Mellon, Walton, and Ford grants.
- ii) Request that trustees undergo anti-racism training and training in how to build more inclusive cultures.
- iii) Ask boards to sponsor seats for eminent individuals who will contribute expertise but not financial support (including artists, academics, writers, community organizers, and leaders in other fields).

c) **Metrics for success:** Trustees to sign on to a considered plan for diversifying board membership and to ensure its timely facilitation.

3) **ACTION: Commit to diversifying staff.**

a) **Timeline:** This process is divided into two phases: analysis and implementation. The analysis phase should take no more than 16 months, with the presentation of a board-approved hiring policy aimed at diversifying all departments of the institution. Implementation (i.e. hiring) phase, should continue indefinitely, and always, going forward.

b) **Steps for implementation:**

- i) Undertake a careful analysis of the current makeup of your institution's staff, according to gender, race, class, and different abilities. This analysis should be across all departments, and should highlight which departments might need extra attention to diversify staff (e.g. an institution that has a curatorial department that is majority white and/or male, a development department that is majority female yet also white, and a visitor services department that is both racially and gender mixed means that the commitment to diversifying staff is still necessary and should be focused on the departments with the least pre-existing diversity). Institution's individual analysis should include AAM and AAMD survey results to see how it is performing against other institutions nationwide.
- ii) Create a Board-approved, institution-wide policy to diverse hiring practices. This policy should be made public to all existing staff members.
- iii) HR and/or external hiring committee to be given instructions for making sure their candidate pools maintain the institution's commitment to staff diversity. HR and/or external hiring committees should utilize existing resources for expanding their candidate pools, including foundation fellowships working on museum diversity (e.g. Mellon, Walton, and Ford), multicultural internship programs, community and state colleges, successful models for diversifying candidate pools (e.g. Free The Bid), and colleagues at other institutions or universities who model diverse hiring practices.
- iv) Create a checks and balances system so that when new positions open, it is

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- clear that the widest net has been cast for qualified potential candidates.
- v) As institution's staff begins and/or continues to diversify, support systems for employees must be implemented, including "cultural competency and robust unconscious bias training," along with clear pathways for professional growth (i.e. no glass ceilings).
  - c) **Metrics for success:** An analysis of the makeup of an institution's staff, according to gender, race, class, and different abilities should be undertaken and recorded every 3-5 years. The results should be presented to all institution staff and board members. Staff should receive and complete questionnaires about their experiences of diversity (i.e. do they experience their colleagues as a diverse community). By 2024, institutions should be a true reflection of the towns, cities and communities to which they provide service.

## 4) **ACTION: Commit to Unconscious Bias Training and Anti-racism Training for Staff and Board**

- a) **Timeline:** 16 months, all U.S museums and art organizations should have implemented robust unconscious bias training.
- b) **Steps for implementation:**
  - i) Identify funding for this within institutions and, especially for organizations with fewer available funds, external bodies who can help.
  - ii) Identify best practices within and outside of the field.
  - iii) Avoid reinventing the wheel by consulting and employ successful models as roadmaps.
- c) **Metrics for success:** Trainings have been completed; a report of findings/ reflections on the process is circulated publicly and perhaps even presented on at AAM and/or CAA.

## 5) **ACTION: Know Your Rights:** Commit to educating employees so that they know their rights regarding bias, discrimination, harassment, and workplace issues. Provide clear pathways to upholding these rights both inside and outside of institutions.

### a) **Timeline:** Immediate.

### b) **Steps for implementation:**

- i) Ask institutions to create clear "bills of rights" regarding reporting and resolution of bias, discrimination, and harassment.
- ii) Commit to protection for whistleblowing and against retaliation.
- iii) Research the creation of an unbiased repository for complaints, an external and independent ombuds-entity within our field to which staffing data and claims of harassment and discrimination must be reported.
- iv) Partner with extant Times Up legal defense fund (or other entity) to provide legal resources and aid workers in the museum field.
- v) **Metrics for success:** The dissemination of clear and concise information

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about staff rights: the legal definitions of discrimination, harassment, and other workplace infractions; reporting; legal timelines/deadlines; taking legal action. Proposal for creation of independent ombuds-entity (or actual implementation!). Establishment of legal resources—most likely through an extant defense fund—for workers in the museum field.

## 6) **ACTION:** Commit to Paid Family Leave for all care roles.

- a) **Timeline:** on a case-by-case basis, but the goal should be to roll out paid family leave programs at pilot level by 2022 and universal level by 2024 at the latest. That gives boards and organizations a mandate to effect change for the next generation of working professionals who are just coming into the field now.
- b) **Steps for implementation:**
  - i) Identify successful models in the for-profit sector, and engage in knowledge exchange and research collection through both focused meetings (eg. for senior staff and directors) and town halls.
  - ii) Begin to sensitize board members now that this conversation will occur and is unavoidable, presenting it as a way to lead in the non-profit field.
  - iii) Pilot programs if/as necessary to test it out.
  - iv) Engage at the national level with similar efforts.
- c) **Metrics for success:** paid family leave is the standard for museum/arts orgs by 2024.

## 7) **ACTION:** Commit to support the right of colleagues to organize, including to form unions.

- a) **Timeline:** now
- b) **Steps for implementation:** publicly and explicitly support this right in an op-ed, and acknowledge the traditional divide between “management” and “workers” will not achieve needed change in the field—only complete solidarity will.
- c) **Metrics for success:** when junior workers feel confident there is commonality of purpose with senior workers in the field and vice versa, even if/when experience and goals vary.

## 8) **ACTION:** Mentorship / Career development. Commit to the creation of leadership pipelines, including sustained mentorship, training, and coaching for employees and managers at all levels. Make this a priority of leaders within institutions. Provide resources for diversifying skills.

- a) **Timeline:** Immediate (and long-term)
- b) **Steps for implementation:**
  - i) Sustained training, coaching, and structured review system for both junior and senior staff (i.e., weekly one-on-ones; resources for junior staff to find external mentors and mandate for senior staff to become mentors).

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- ii) Outreach to those in leadership and management positions to make this a priority.
- iii) Aim to augment or create resources for employees who wish to diversify skills and education.
- c) **Metrics for success:** Completion of steps listed above.

## 9) **ACTION:** No Unpaid Internships.

a) **Timeline:** Immediate.

### b) **Steps for implementation:**

- i) Identify funding partners that support professional development programs.
- ii) Create partnerships with universities, community colleges, technical schools and transitional housing centers to share funding resources and grant opportunities that support intern programs.
- iii) Each department hosting interns creating a job description for internships lasting either six months or one year. Job descriptions should outline project goals, actionable tasks for each intern to undertake, opportunities for interns to publicly present their work, metrics for success, and reviews.
- iv) If possible, employees tasked with managing interns should take a mentor training workshop.
- v) An hourly rate or yearly salary is determined, dependent on timespan of internship.
- vi) Interns are paid through institution payroll, as with all employees.
- c) **Metrics for success:** Financially solvent internship program that pays interns living wages while in service of the institution.

## 10) **ACTION:** Post salary bracket with job postings.

a) **Timeline:** Immediate.

### b) **Steps for implementation:**

- i) Establish fixed salary brackets for each job in the institution by compiling data on current and historical staff salaries and cross-referencing the AAMD Salary Guide.
- ii) Include salary bracket in each job posting going forward.
- c) **Metrics for success:** All future job postings will have salary bracket clearly noted.