



# CODE OF ETHICS AND CONDUCT

## Museum of Riverside

Draft as of 7 March 2023

Approval recommended by the Museum of Riverside Board on \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by the City Council on \_\_\_\_\_

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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose of This Document**

The purpose of ethical principles is to articulate conduct essential to uphold the integrity of a profession. Effective application of these standards is possible only if the people they affect are consistently and voluntarily committed to them.<sup>1</sup> Museums enjoy public visibility, and their employees enjoy public esteem and trust. With this comes a responsibility for the organization to manage itself wisely as the steward of a public trust. In the eyes of the public, Museum employees are never wholly separable from the organization. Employees must be concerned not only with their personal motivations, but with the way their actions may be perceived.

Museums serve a unique function in a community. Each has a responsibility to define the manner in which it will exercise principled community participation. No museum can be objective or offer genuinely neutral programming. In every programmatic choice, the Museum of Riverside (Museum) takes a position. Thus, articulating goals, recognizing the context in which programs are presented, and accepting the necessity of adjusting over time lie at the core of responsible and ethical service. These must be mindful decisions intended as positive social contributions.

Working in museums, whether as employees or volunteers, involves distinct responsibilities and privileges. Museums are public service organizations, and the results of museum work are intended to outlast each individual's tenure. A commitment to public service must motivate performance at the highest level of professional standards and abilities.

### **1.2 Supplement to Related Professional Ethics Statements**

The Museum of Riverside's Code of Ethics establishes standards of conduct and ethical guidance that are specific to the museum profession and to the operation of the Museum of Riverside, or upon which the Museum places particular emphasis. The Museum reserves the right to revise this document as awareness within the museum profession evolves.

This document supplements the [American Alliance of Museums' Code of Ethics for Museums](#), to which accredited museums must formally adhere. Overlap exists with other Museum policy documents approved by the Museum of Riverside Board and, when required, City Council. Museum employees are obligated to remain abreast of the content of current Museum policies and procedures.

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<sup>1</sup> Marie C. Malero, *Museum Governance: Mission Ethics Policy*, Smithsonian Institution Press, 1994, pp. 17, 109.



This policy is an aspirational document applying to Museum of Riverside staff and volunteers. It complements [Chapter 2.78 of the Riverside Municipal Code, Code of Ethics and Conduct, which is applicable only to elected officials and Board and Commission members](#). Museum employees are encouraged to refer to Chapter 2.78 of the Riverside Municipal Code, Code of Ethics and Conduct, for guiding principles.

The City of Riverside is constantly evolving its policies, many of which have ethics and conduct implications. When a City of Riverside policy is known by the Museum to exist for a specific issue, it is noted in this document.

Codes of ethics govern several professions that are either unique to or common in museums. Examples include codes for archivists, curators, collections professionals, oral historians, and fundraising professionals. Museum of Riverside employees must familiarize themselves with and adhere to these professional codes of ethics as they align with each employee's duties and particularly insofar as they may exceed standards established in City policies. See Appendix A.

### 1.3 Authorities

Non-compliance with one or more of the principles included in the Code of Ethics and Conduct may result in disciplinary action. Note that breach of certain Citywide or Human Resources Policies and Procedures that are cross-referenced in this document may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Repeated breach of ethical principles can jeopardize the Museum of Riverside's accreditation by the American Alliance of Museums.

If an employee or volunteer reasonably believes that one or more employees or volunteers are in breach of a principle in this Code, a written complaint may be filed with the Museum Director. If the complaint is in regard to the Museum Director, the alleged violation may be filed with the Human Resources Director. A Board member may be removed from office only by vote of the City Council, which may do so without cause (refer to the [Boards & Commissions Handbook](#)). Violations by volunteers may result in revocation of volunteer privileges. Individuals who wish to file a complaint alleging breach of the City of Riverside's Code of Ethics and Conduct, which applies only to elected officials and Board and Commission members, may do so [online](#) or directly with the City Clerk's office.

## **SECTION 2: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESSIBILITY, AND INCLUSION**

Diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) affect all aspects of Museum operations and are pivotal to the Museum's continuing relevance. Aspects of these issues are embedded in other Museum policy documents, the Museum's strategic plan, and the City of Riverside's strategic



plan and policies. These issues affect many operational matters, some of which are determined by authorities outside the Museum. Addressing DEAI requires fundamental shifts in thinking and acknowledgement of systems of privilege that challenge the Museum in the present.

## 2.1 Goals

Achieving DEAI goals is core to ethical operations. Without claiming to be comprehensive, and recognizing that Museum staff require the support of others within the City to realize objectives, the following list indicates the scope of Museum-related activities that relate to DEAI goals:

- Encouraging the diversification of staff and Board.
- Making Museum exhibitions and programs available through regular, established hours, as frequently and at as many times of day as feasible.
- Complying with legal accessibility requirements. This requires balancing perceived conflicts between historic preservation and physical accessibility to sites and collections.
- Ensuring that digital communications are adapted to accessibility requirements.
- Permitting ready access to collections and related information; access requires that collections are held, recorded, documented, unencumbered, preserved, and protected.
- Ensuring that participation of the widest possible audience is encouraged.
- Providing multi-lingual translations when feasible and/or program content dictates.
- Developing programs that encourage tolerance; respecting pluralistic values, traditions, and concerns; and actively engaging people in interpreting their own histories.
- Employing terminology that respects all people's preferences regarding themselves.
- For large-scale projects, undertaking community engagement that aligns with City of Riverside policies and procedures governing community engagement.
- Providing frontline staff and volunteers with high-quality customer service training upon hire and annually thereafter.
- Providing staff with annual training in DEAI issues relating to program planning, education, site design, community engagement, audience research, and related matters.

## 2.2 Land Acknowledgment Statement

A statement acknowledging that the Museum physically occupies traditional Indigenous lands will be used widely on the Museum's website, in publications, and when introducing programs:

The Museum of Riverside is grateful to stand on the traditional and ancestral lands of the Cahuilla, Gabrielino-Tongva, Luiseño, and Serrano peoples. The Cahuilla, Gabrielino-Tongva, Luiseño, and Serrano continue to live and thrive in Southern California.



The precise wording of the land acknowledgment statement may be revised over time and in consultation with Indigenous advisors without requiring formal revision of this policy document.

### 2.3 Statement on Racism, Gender Inequity, and Other Forms of Discrimination

It is antithetical to the Museum’s mission and goals to perpetuate or enable racism, sexism, ageism, gender discrimination, religious bigotry, or other systems of oppression or diminishment of individuals or groups on the basis of race, color, ethno-religious origin, descent, sexual orientation, language, age, or disability. On its website and in other contexts where feasible, the Museum will use the following statement:

Through its programs and services, the Museum will proactively combat the dehumanizing impacts of discrimination and social inequity. The Museum’s programs will not hide, overlook, diminish, or misrepresent the significance and reality of human experience as expressed in the historic record. The Museum acknowledges the historic roots and contemporary pervasiveness of racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination; acknowledges the continuing prevalence of unconscious and unintentional perpetuation of these forms of injustice; and affirms proactive and mindful anti-discriminatory commitment and intent.

## **SECTION 3: ETHICS**

### 3.1 General Ethical Principles and Intellectual Freedom

Museum employees and volunteers are expected to aspire to high standards and values, which include, but are not limited to, honesty, integrity, fairness, compassion, respect, excellence, and responsibility. Museum employees are expected to value creativity and be open to the ideas of others.

An atmosphere of intellectual freedom is core to the effective development of well researched and presented programming. While employees are expected to support management decisions, they will not be required to reverse or alter defensible professional statements or judgments in order to conform to those decisions. In such situations, employees may go on record with supported dissenting views without fear of retaliation. Refer also to the separate Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies document, which addresses the topic of intellectual independence.



## 3.2 Compliance with the Law

The range of local, state, national, and international legislation and regulatory information that affects museum operations is large.<sup>2</sup> Employees and volunteers are not expected to be familiar with every state and federal law, regulation, or principle applicable to the Museum. However, it is every employee's responsibility to consult with the employee's immediate supervisor, the Museum Director, and the City Attorney whenever a questionable situation arises.

Particularly in instances when competing claims of ownership of objects in Museum collections arise, these processes will be handled legally and ethically and with respect, transparency, and integrity in mind.

## 3.3 Conflicts of Interest

The City of Riverside's City Clerk's Office identifies staff members who are required to provide personal disclosures and must complete State of California Form 700. See also the [City of Riverside's Employee Handbook](#) and [Chapter 2.78.010 of the Riverside Municipal Code](#) for additional information.

All employees and volunteers must avoid conduct that would create any real, potential, or perceived conflict of interest with the interests of the Museum. Employees may not use or exploit the Museum's name, reputation, property, or services; compromise its goodwill in the community; use their positions for personal gain; or to benefit another person at the expense of the Museum, its mission, its reputation, or the community it serves. Employees shall not engage in any sustained activity (with or without compensation) other than assigned duties or Museum-related business during work hours or using City resources. See also section 3.11, below.

### 3.3.1 Raffles and Wagering

Monetary raffles or other forms of gambling prohibited by law and in which money changes hands will not be organized or offered by Museum staff. Such raffles may occur only when undertaken within legal requirements and if organized independently by and solely benefitting the Riverside Museum Associates (RMA) or the Harada House Foundation (HHF), both of which are independent 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporations. Raffles organized by the RMA or the HHF will not be reviewed or managed by the Museum in any manner. Whether a non-

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<sup>2</sup> Pertinent laws include, but are not limited to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA); Federal Antiquities Act of 1906; Archaeological and Historic Data Preservation Act of 1974; Executive Order 11593, 1971; Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976; National Environmental Policy Act; Convention on Cultural Property Implementation (CPIA); UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (1995); California's AB-275, Native American Cultural Preservation (2020). See Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies for additional references.



monetary door prize is offered directly by the Museum, or a raffle or game is conducted by the RMA or HHF, no employee or member of an employee's immediate family may participate in a door prize drawing or similar legally permitted promotion.

### 3.3.2 Personal Collecting

A conflict of interest will be deemed to exist when the collecting activities of any employee compete with those of the Museum, or when employees take advantage of information confidential to the Museum to enhance personal collections. The obligation to determine and disclose personal collecting activities that are or would appear to be in conflict with official duties rests with each individual. It is expected that the disclosure procedure will be regarded as a matter of routine and not as an invasion of privacy.

Museum staff is expected to inform the Museum Director in writing of all personal acquisitions of collection-related artifacts, specimens, and/or documents within three months of the acquisition. For personal acquisitions made by the Museum Director, the Chair of the Museum of Riverside Board should be informed. The Museum will have the right, for a period of six months from the date of notification, to acquire any such object purchased or collected by any staff member, at the price paid by the staff member, plus any related expenses. The purchase must be completed within one year of the staff member's initial written notification to the Museum Director, or the right is forfeit. Should the Museum become aware of a relevant disclosure that was not made by the employee, or an employee refuses to sell, a record of the employee's decision not to comply with ethical principles regarding competitive collecting may be filed with the employee's personnel records.

The right of the Museum to acquire from staff members' personal collections does not extend to objects that were collected prior to the staff member's employment by the Museum, nor does it extend to bequests or personal gifts from friends or family to the staff member. The staff member is not expected to inform the Museum of bequests or personal gifts, whether related or unrelated to the Museum's collections. As a courtesy, staff members will disclose circumstances regarding prospective sales or trades of Museum-related personal collections, regardless of when they were acquired, in order to provide the Museum first right of refusal.

### 3.3.3 Lending from Personal Collections

If an employee lends an object for exhibition at the Museum, it will be lent anonymously. Similarly, illustrations of objects in staff's personal collections must be credited anonymously in the Museum's publications. Since objects can be enhanced in value by being included in a museum exhibition, the sole consideration of the Museum in asking for and accepting loans from staff, Board members, or other volunteers will be the prospective benefit to the public. There should be no appearance of an attempt to enhance market values for individuals.





### 3.3.4 Prohibition on Personal Use of Museum's Collection Objects

No employees or volunteers may use in their homes or for any other personal purpose any object that is a part of the Museum's collections or under the care of the Museum except for the official business of the institution. An example of acceptable official business might be the temporary overnight housing of a collection object at an employee's home after a late night transit; such instances should be anticipated and authorized by the Museum Director in advance.

No employee or volunteer may grant permission for use of any object that is a part of the Museum's collections to political or business associates for personal use such as installation in offices or business lobbies. Exhibitions in any public place, whether incorporating objects from the Museum's permanent collections or not, are developed solely for the Museum's programmatic purposes and public benefit.

### 3.3.5 Gifts and Discounts

Refer to [Section 01.009.00](#) of the City of Riverside Administrative Manual as well as the [City of Riverside's Employee Handbook](#). In brief, personal gifts of any nature from business contacts should be politely declined. An exception is the list of discounts from businesses that have been negotiated by the City for the benefit of all City employees. The gift of an item related to the Museum's collections that appears to be extended to a staff member personally should be politely declined unless there is a clear understanding that it is a gift to the collections and is accepted under the standard procedures for gifts to the Museum.

### 3.3.6 Business Dealings with Related Parties

No employee may act as a vendor, be employed by a vendor, retain a financial interest directly or indirectly in a vendor, or accept personal discounts from vendors that are not available to the public at large (this does not apply to discounts offered directly to the Museum as a public benefit institution). Board members and volunteers also shall not use their positions to solicit personal discounts or promote the interests of a vendor over the interests of the Museum.

In the event that the Museum procures goods or services from a related party such as an employee's family member, the transaction must be done at "arm's length." In other words, the terms of the agreement and the quality of the goods and services shall be no more or less favorable to the Museum than is available on the open market.



### 3.4 Political Activities

Refer to the [City of Riverside's Employee Handbook](#). In brief, an employee must avoid the appearance, in their capacity as a City employee, of supporting or opposing an individual candidate and may not use City resources, including time, for political activity.

### 3.5 Outside Volunteer Activities

Employees are encouraged, but not required, to participate in voluntary outside activities with community groups or public service organizations. If employees volunteering could appear to be acting as representatives of the Museum, they must disclose that to, and seek prior approval from, their supervisor to avoid possible misrepresentation. Employees must clarify to community groups or service organizations their roles as volunteers in their personal capacities and not as representatives of the Museum. Such disclaimers notwithstanding, employees should conduct themselves so that their activities on behalf of community or public service organizations do not reflect adversely on the reputation of the Museum. Outside volunteer activities are not required and, as such, employees shall not consider their time spent in such participation as eligible for overtime pay or compensatory time off.

### 3.6 Solicitation and Distribution

Employee solicitation includes, but is not limited to, spoken invitations or other oral requests to contribute to, discuss, join, or participate in organizations, fundraising, surveys, and similar. Distribution includes, but is not limited to, circulation of literature, petitions, sign-ups, contributions, and similar. Employees may not engage in solicitation during the working time of the employee soliciting or the employee being solicited. Employees selling fundraising items on behalf of their children may place products and/or order forms in common areas for coworkers to peruse during breaks.

### 3.7 Use of Proceeds from Sale of Deaccessioned Collection Objects

Refer to the separate Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies document, Section 4.3, for detail on the deaccessioning process and use of proceeds from sale of deaccessioned objects. In brief, proceeds from sale of deaccessioned collections may be used only for acquisitions to the permanent collection.

### 3.8 Fundraising Practices

Fundraising is conducted on behalf of the Museum of Riverside by two legally independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, the Riverside Museum Associates (RMA) and the Harada House Foundation (HHF). Funds may also be donated directly to restricted accounts held by the



City of Riverside on the Museum's behalf. Employees involved in soliciting financial support or gifts-in-kind for the benefit of the Museum must do so with absolute honesty and integrity.

Employees must be factually accurate in any representations made to potential donors. Acknowledgment of gifts must be prompt, accurate, and sincere. Donations to the Museum that are solicited for a specific purpose or donated with restrictions must be used exclusively and as quickly as possible for the donor's intended purpose. This includes grant funding from governments, foundations, or corporate funders. Management of grants must be undertaken in accordance with the [City of Riverside's Grants Administration Policy](#).

Should there be a delay in using donated or granted funds as intended, or a desire to repurpose funds, prompt communication with the donor (or heirs, if known) is required and assent in writing from the donor or grantor before proceeding.

No employee or volunteer may receive compensation for fundraising on a commission basis or receive a portion of funds raised for any reason whatsoever.

### 3.9 Confidentiality

In general, handling of confidential information is governed by [Section 01.003.00 of the City of Riverside Administrative Manual](#).

#### 3.9.1 Records

As a department of a municipality, the Museum's operational records are public documents. Requests for copies of records shall be referred to the City Clerk, who will initiate the process in place for public records requests. Employees shall refrain from volunteering donor contact information, monetary value of collections, the identity of donors who wish to remain anonymous, and security procedures except as these may be included in a formal public records request.

### 3.10 Ethical Concerns Regarding Human Resources

#### 3.10.1 Recruitment Processes

Processes relating to employee recruitment, discipline, and separation are determined and overseen by the Human Resources Department. Refer to the [Employee Handbook](#) and other relevant Human Resources policies; documents can be found online via the Human Resources website.



Refer to the City of Riverside Human Resources Policies and Procedures, section I-1 and I-2 for processes related to the recruitment, testing, and eligibility of candidates and the role of the Museum’s designated hiring manager. Any interested candidates for active Museum positions should be directed to the Human Resources department; the Museum should not accept any résumés or application materials directly.

### 3.10.2 Requests for References

Requests for references on current or former employees must be referred to the Human Resources Department. Staff are not to offer oral or written references without prior approval by the Human Resources Department.

Requests for references on non-employees, including volunteers or vendors, must be referred to the Museum Director who may seek additional City approvals in order to respond. Should it be deemed appropriate to provide a written reference, the content of that reference must be reviewed in advance by the Museum Director. As a rule, open-ended letters of reference addressed “To whom it may concern” will not be provided.

### 3.10.3 Volunteers and Interns

Access to the Museum’s internal activities is a privilege. The lack of monetary compensation for working on behalf of the Museum does not free a volunteer or intern from adhering to the highest of ethical standards. Volunteers and interns are trusted representatives of the Museum; thus, they bear many of the same responsibilities and obligations as employees.

Most notably, volunteers and interns must act for the betterment of the Museum and not for their own personal gain. They must fully and conscientiously fulfill the duties of their position and avoid any conflicts of interest or the appearance of conflicts of interest. In carrying out their duties, volunteers and interns may become aware of privileged information regarding programs, collections, donors, and administration. All nonpublic information must be kept confidential both during and after affiliation with the Museum. Volunteers and interns must not misuse the Museum’s or the City of Riverside’s name, property, or services, nor should they compromise the good will and reputation of the Museum within the community.

### 3.11 Outside Employment and Consultation

Refer to the City of Riverside [Employee Handbook](#) and Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual, section I-7. Outside employment must be approved in writing following the procedures established by Human Resources.

Certain types of outside employment, including teaching, writing, and consulting, can benefit both the Museum and an employee by providing professional development and promoting the



Museum within professional circles. Employees are encouraged to teach, lecture, and write, provided those activities do not interfere with an employee's performance of duties.

Employees engaged in outside activities directly related to those they perform for the Museum are often perceived as representatives of the Museum, even though the outside work may be wholly independent of the Museum. For that reason, it is important that the Museum be kept informed of such activities. Remuneration may be accepted only when an outside activity occurs outside normal business hours and the employee is not claiming overtime pay or compensatory time off for the professional activity. Employees engaged in outside paid employment should not use the name of the Museum or their affiliation with the Museum or the City of Riverside in connection with such employment beyond identification of the Museum/City as their employer.

Certain types of employment can create potential ethical problems for the Museum since employees are often considered representatives of the Museum regardless of disclaimers made to the public. For this reason, activities such as monetary appraisals or object authentication should not be performed by Museum employees in any capacity.

### 3.12 Museum Earned Revenue Activities

Operation of the Museum's retail stores, assessment of fees for services, or other activity to generate earned revenue may be undertaken on the Museum's behalf by the Museum's affiliate nonprofit organizations or directly by the Museum. When directly pursued by Museum staff, earned revenue activities should be conducted in compliance with City procedures regarding, for example, cash handling, and a manner consistent with the Museum's mission, ethical standards, and its goal to deliver a high level of service to the public. Such activities and related publicity should be relevant to and not compromise the Museum's mission, collections, exhibitions, and programs, and should be consistent with the Museum's fundamental educational purposes.

### 3.13 Business Referrals

When an employee is asked to suggest sources for objects, materials, or services such as professional services, the employee should endeavor to name multiple sources in order to avoid the appearance of official Museum endorsement or favoritism. In areas where the public may assume the Museum to have competence in referring to specialists, such as conservators or antique appraisers, the Museum will make every effort to keep current a list of multiple reputable specialists.

### 3.14 Whistleblower Policy

The City of Riverside provides for "whistleblower" reports through its 311 app. Learn more about the hotline here: <https://riversideca.gov/internalaudit/3-1-1-whistleblower-hotline>.



## **SECTION 4: CONDUCT**

### 4.1 Rules of Conduct

Employees are expected to observe high standards of job performance and conduct themselves in a positive, supportive, and cooperative manner when interacting with visitors, vendors, donors, coworkers, and management. All employees are expected to follow established Museum and City procedures and safety regulations. Refer to Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual, Section III-4 ([Violence in the Workplace](#)), Section III-6 ([Harassment-Free Workplace](#)), and the City of Riverside [Employee Handbook](#). If the employee fails to comply, the employee may be subject to discipline as established under Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual, Section III-1.

In addition, the Museum stresses that employees may be disciplined for misconduct, as outlined under Human Resources Policy and Procedure Manual, Section III-1, which includes but is not limited to the following:

- Willful misuse or destruction of Museum property or the property of a coworker on Museum premises.
- Falsifying or altering Museum records.
- Willful violation of Museum policies regarding collections, programs, and inclusive interaction with the community.



## **APPENDIX A: SELECTED RELATED PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES**

American Alliance of Museums. Adopted 1993, amended 2000. [\*Code of Ethics for Museums\*](#).

American Alliance of Museums' DEAI resources. <https://www.aam-us.org/programs/diversity-equity-accessibility-and-inclusion/>. Accessed May 11, 2021.

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**APPENDIX B:  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING**

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and read a copy of the Museum of Riverside Code of Ethics and Conduct. I understand that the policy contains important information on my privileges and obligations as an employee of the Museum of Riverside. I understand that if I have questions regarding the content or interpretation of this document, I should contact the Museum Director. I understand that non-compliance with the Code of Ethics and Conduct may result in disciplinary action.

The Museum of Riverside may, at any time and without notice, modify, augment, delete, or revoke any and all policies contained in this policy document, other than those prescribed by law or those established by superseding City authority. Substantive changes or edits must be approved by the Museum of Riverside’s governing body, City Council, and will supersede or eliminate those found in earlier versions of the Code of Ethics and Conduct.

I understand that I am responsible for reading this document, and I agree to abide by the principles contained herein.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**RETURN SIGNED COPY OF THIS SHEET TO THE MANAGER OF OPERATIONS.**