



Museum of Riverside Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE BOARD **DATE: MARCH 24, 2021**
FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT **WARDS: ALL**
SUBJECT: ADOPT AN EDUCATION AND INTERPRETATION POLICY FOR THE MUSEUM OF RIVERSIDE

ISSUE:

Adopt an Education and Interpretation Policy for the Museum of Riverside.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum of Riverside Board adopt an Education and Interpretation Policy for the Museum of Riverside.

BACKGROUND:

The Museum of Riverside (Museum) has had a number of policies over the years that partially meet education policy criteria. The most recent document was adopted in 2016 in response to the expectations of the reaccreditation process launched in that year. The 2016 document met the minimal needs at that time but did not sufficiently address the range of philosophical and practical considerations that the 21st-century museum is expected to consider in the context of education. Educational issues are multiplying at a faster pace than many other aspects of museum operation and are often a direct outgrowth of current social issues.

At its meeting on January 27, 2021, the Collections Committee reviewed an Education and Interpretation Policy draft and requested revisions. At its meeting on February 24, 2021, the Collections Committee reviewed and approved a draft that presented revisions to Section 4.1, First-Person Representation and Cultural Accuracy and to Section 6.3, Barriers to Participation.

DISCUSSION:

An education policy is not currently required by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), the museum field's accrediting body, as a condition of accreditation. However, pressure is rising in the museum field that may lead to the AAM to include an education policy requirement among the core documents required of accredited museums. There are few models for this type of document, and no "template" or table of contents identify an industry standard.

In this context, “interpretation,” which is at the core of the museum education function, refers to the creative means museums use to engage audiences and enhance learning through object-based methods. Museums adhere to their missions *as a service to their communities*. Object-based education and informal learning are increasingly perceived as an avenue for connecting with and engaging a community. While museums have long been understood as adjunct components of the educational establishment, it only been comparatively recently that educators have been integrated into exhibition development processes from inception rather than brought in when plans are being finalized, to bridge the gap between complex exhibition topics and K-12 and non-specialist audiences.

Education policies that our peers have adopted range from quite specific program plans to high-level philosophical statements about pedagogical direction or the role of a museum in mediating the content it generates and provides. Museum staff offer a statement that combines philosophy and specifics, including statements relevant to professional practice, cultural representation, program emphases and priorities, and visitor engagement. The draft document recommended for adoption is intended as a policy document and as such refers to specific programs as examples rather than commitments.

The document presented has been co-written by the Museum’s education staff and the director. A variety of published resources, peers’ documents, and discussions with colleagues informed the process.

The City Clerk is in concurrence that policy documents such as the Education and Interpretation Policy, which are unique to the Museum Department and do not for other reasons (such as AAM expectations) require governing body approval, should be approved by the Museum Board but need not be presented to City Council.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by:	Moises Lopez, Deputy City Manager
Attachment:	Education Policy