

# MUSEUMS ADVANCING RACIAL JUSTICE

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### [Overview](#)

As gathering places for conversation and exploration within our communities, museums are an important part of America's cultural fabric. As part of its [Our Shared Future: Reckoning with our Racial Past](#) initiative, the Smithsonian Institution has partnered with the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) to host and facilitate Museums Advancing Racial Justice, a three-day convening for professionals in the museum community, in April 2024.

Created in collaboration with and sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution, the 2024 Museums Advancing Racial Justice Convening is hosted at the Science Museum of Minnesota. This Convening is designed for professionals in U.S. museums and cultural institutions who have made significant contributions and commitments to advancing racial justice in their field to help them gather, share, imagine, and grow together.

The Convening will be specifically action-oriented and designed for participants from up to 25 museums and cultural institutions to collaborate on and explore all-day workshops featuring:

- Examples of evidence-based, actionable long-term plans that can be replicated
- Tools and frameworks on the topics of:
  - Facilitating conversations about race
  - Community engagement practices
  - Internal culture change
  - Content development
- Action plans and initial steps for the use of these tools and frameworks

Work time will be prioritized, with the idea that this Convening is not the first step in an organization's equity journey, but a push to a new level of action.

Participating institutions who submit mini-grant applications following the Convening may receive funding of up to \$10,000 for the purpose of supporting the implementation of their racial justice work at their home institution.

The success of the Convening will be measured by the potential change it may foster in attendees through evaluative processes and engagement with attendees.

### [Where is this project coming from?](#)

The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest museum and education complex. Its [\*Our Shared Future: Reckoning with Our Racial Past\*](#) initiative seeks to spark positive social change and build a more equitable future through interdisciplinary scholarship, creative partnerships, dialogue, and engagement. The initiative draws on the Smithsonian's strong and multidisciplinary expertise, rich collections, and unique convening power to delve into the legacy of race and racism to support a collective shift toward equity.

As part of its commitment to building a more equitable future, the Smithsonian is focusing on driving change internally through efforts like the appointment of a Head Diversity Officer and the implementation of a new ethical returns policy; within the larger museum community through programs like Museums Advancing Racial Justice; and with the public through exhibitions, digital resources, and programming like national and community conversations on race, and the National Education Summit.

### [What do you mean by racial justice?](#)

Racial justice can involve focusing on race as a factor in a community's access to equitable opportunities and outcomes and working to address, understand, and/or mitigate existing barriers for these communities. We recognize that racial justice may look like different things to different institutions or in different cultures and landscapes. The application for participation in this Convening provides the opportunity for you to tell your own story of your institution's relationship to race and culture. We are not prescriptive about what this work looks like or whose work is valid.

## [Why the Science Museum of Minnesota?](#)

With equity as one of its [core institutional values](#), the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM) has a long history of facilitating learning opportunities focused on dismantling systems of oppression and creating equitable change.

- The award-winning [RACE: Are We So Different? exhibition](#) is a centerpiece of this work. Created in partnership with the American Anthropological Association, *RACE* invites visitors to explore the concept of race. The traditional exhibit experience was strengthened by the programming surrounding it, from Talking Circle conversations to original Science Live theater presentations to field trips and more. After its 2007 debut, *RACE* went on a national tour, where it reached more than two million visitors at 60 cultural institutions. The museum continues to deepen the *RACE* experience and extend it beyond the gallery walls with a growing catalog of online resources that can be accessed from anywhere.
- Since its debut, *RACE* has launched many partnerships and seeded valuable collaborations within the communities it has touched. The *RACE* in Greater Minnesota project put smaller versions of the award-winning exhibit — along with valuable community programming — into communities outside of the Twin Cities metro. The project served as a catalyst for powerful dialogue to challenge assumptions and help community members connect with each other in meaningful ways.
- In the recent *RACE Forward* project, SMM undertook intentional internal work to understand what it means for a museum to center equity in its work and make real progress toward systemic change. Funding from the National Science Foundation allowed the museum to form groups that worked to adjust policies, procedures, and staff supports to center equity, with the goals of understanding our complicity in perpetuating racist views and actions within the museum, examining anti-racist views and actions, and taking action to center racial equity throughout the organization.
- The Kitty Andersen Youth Science Center (KAYSC) is SMM's out-of-school-time home for youth science achievement, career readiness, and social justice. The program serves hundreds of youth who are traditionally underserved in STEM each year — girls, youth of color, and youth from low-income families. Its unique STEM Justice framework puts young people in the roles of teachers, learners, and leaders, helping them build STEM and leadership skills and preparing them to make a lasting difference in their communities.
- The IDEAL Center (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Leadership) is SMM's home for leadership development training through the lens of equity. It began as a professional development provider for educators, helping them change the way they understand and deliver STEM content to inspire *all* students to recognize the relevance of STEM in their lives. It has evolved to serve professionals from school systems, colleges and universities, informal STEM education institutions, government agencies, and other organizations across the nation. Using research-driven strategies to help participants become agents of change, IDEAL Center training helps them build equitable communities not only in their professional capacities but in their personal lives, as well.

These are just a few examples of programs and projects that have helped SMM establish itself as a leader in creating meaningful experiences, partnerships, and programming that help the people it serves to talk about critical issues at the intersection of science, equity, and education.

As a leader in facilitating discussions and providing a safe space to talk about equity and deconstructing racial systems of oppression, SMM is a trusted institution that can provide this truth scientifically, with a deep and lasting impact.

The Smithsonian has called upon SMM, as a leader in this space, to leverage its tools, experience, and partnerships to help members of the nation's cultural organization community learn from each other and grow, becoming change agents at their own institutions and organizations.

- SMM is uniquely positioned to deliver this content in transformational ways, with decades of experience reaching the public, students, educators, and civic organizations with its powerful programming around equity and inclusion.

### [Who is involved?](#)

This work is a partnership between the Smithsonian Institution and the Science Museum of Minnesota (SMM), with funding from the Bank of America through the *Our Shared Future: Reckoning with our Racial Past* Initiative. The project is being implemented with heavy contributions from groups of expert advisors from across the country: one group advising on the application process, another advising on content development. Additionally, this project has a dedicated group of evaluation professionals. All contributors are recognized and honored in our "About Us" page: [www.smm.org/marj/about](http://www.smm.org/marj/about)

### [When and where will it happen?](#)

The 2024 Museums Advancing Racial Justice Convening will take place Monday, April 15 through Wednesday, April 17, 2024, at the Science Museum of Minnesota: 120 W. Kellogg Blvd, St. Paul, MN 55102. Participants are also invited to attend a welcome party the evening of Sunday, April 14, in St. Paul.

### [Who is invited to attend?](#)

This Convening is designed for professionals in U.S. museums and cultural institutions who have made significant contributions and commitments to the advancement of racial justice in their field to gather, share, imagine, and grow together.

We are committed to prioritizing race-centered institutions and organizations that have often been left out of these kinds of opportunities. While institutions from a variety of circumstances are welcome to apply, we will be working to create room for institutions who have faced budgetary, cultural, geographic, and other kinds of barriers to attend alongside institutions who have had more consistent access to convenings, summits, conferences, and professional development opportunities. As such, we strongly encourage any cultural institution that would benefit from this type of experience to apply. Due to an inability to fully support international participants, participation is open only to U.S. organizations and individuals (including participants from Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories).

In this context, cultural institutions are in some way dedicated to the social promotion and preservation of culture and may include galleries/art centers, parks/preserves, libraries/archives, and more.

The Convening will be specifically action-oriented and designed for participants from up to 25 U.S. museums and cultural institutions. To maximize impact and ensure successful stewardship of the work following the Convening, we are encouraging institutions to send a team of up to three individuals. We encourage teams that are culturally, racially, and economically diverse.

Individual team members should have a passion for addressing critical issues of race in institutions and can be spread across or focused within hierarchies and departments. Institutions should send employees they see as well-suited to the task and compose a team they feel will be empowered to carry the work forward in their home institutions.

### [How much does it cost?](#)

The Convening will be entirely free for all participants (up to three individuals from each participating organization); the Smithsonian is assuming all costs related to participation in the project, including travel, lodging, and food stipends. Each participant will receive a travel stipend of \$1208 to cover flights, four days of hotel stay, and meals that aren't hosted at the Convening.

### [What about travel?](#)

The three days of this Convening are full work days, along with a welcome party the evening before the Convening begins. As such, we recommend that participants arrive in St. Paul on the afternoon of Sunday, April 14, and depart on the morning of Thursday, April 17. This means participants will spend four nights at a hotel in downtown St. Paul, near the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Each (non-local) participant (up to three per institution) will receive a travel stipend of \$1208 for flights, four days of hotel stay, and meals that aren't hosted at the Convening. Due to an inability to fully support international participants, participation is open only to U.S. organizations and individuals (including participants from Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and other U.S. territories).

Local participants will be discussed separately. This amount was estimated as below:

- Four nights at a downtown St. Paul hotel: \$150 per night (a room block at the Hampton Inn & Suites Downtown St. Paul will be offered to participants upon acceptance)
- Round trip flight to and from the Minneapolis/St.Paul International Airport: \$500
- GSA rate per diem for three dinners (recommended travel dates): \$108

If you are in need of additional travel support, we are happy to discuss it on a case-by-case basis.

Participants are primarily expected to attend through a museum or cultural institution, but there may be situations where participants attend the Convening as individuals instead. Likewise, most stipend payments will be paid out to the supporting institutions as a reimbursement for their staff's travel expenses, but alternate arrangements can be made. The travel stipend is not intended to cover staff wages for the hours participants spend at the Convening. Time spent at the Convening is considered the institution's responsibility and commitment to prioritizing this work and continuing it going forward. Many more details will be provided to participants upon application acceptance.

If you have questions about travel, please contact Kendra Eull, the event organizer, at [marj@smm.org](mailto:marj@smm.org).

## [How is evaluation part of the project?](#)

The goals for the evaluation activities embedded into the structure of the Convening and mini-grant process are to:

1. Check the potential for change in museums on advancing racial justice that the Convening may foster;
2. Document and share key learnings, processes and practices with the field to inspire change beyond the Convening.

We acknowledge the tension that exists between openness and confidentiality in this project: documentation and testimonials will allow us to share the Convening experience with the field, while open and confidential sharing about difficult topics during the Convening will support organizational growth.

To address this tension, the Convening evaluation activities will:

- be opt-in, and will occur in different formats, so that participants can engage in these activities when and how they choose;
- be called out in Convening materials, so that participants know when to expect them;
- have an opportunity for participants to give consent to participate;
- be collaborative, where possible, with periodic check-ins with participants to ensure collective assessment of the data;
- protect confidentiality where it is promised.

### **Why evaluation?**

Early in the process, we're paying attention to who's coming to the Convening – what strengths, challenges, and needs they bring, as identified in their applications through their SWOT Analysis – so that we can support their experience at the Convening.

Later, during the Convening, we'll use reflective activities, informal discussions with participants, observations, and a post-Convening feedback survey to understand how participants experienced and applied the learnings from the Convening.

Finally, well after the Convening, we want to understand how institutions and individuals make the changes towards racial justice that they identified in their action plans and/or through their mini-grant projects, in order to document these processes to inspire others in the field towards change.

The evaluators will work to find sensitive and appropriate ways to do project evaluation activities. We have been collaborating with the project planning groups to develop our evaluation plan, and also welcome the input of participants in this process. The evaluation is being led by Evelyn Ronning ([eronning@smm.org](mailto:eronning@smm.org)) from the Science Museum of Minnesota's Department of Research and Evaluation in Learning. Our approach emphasizes *equity* (e.g. centering participant voices, ethical data collection/use), *collaboration* (e.g. shared decision-making and responsibility), and *learning* (e.g. meaningful interpretation of data and generating findings to build capacity).

## [What will happen at the event?](#)

We will provide approximately 18 hours of professional development across three days through workshops and experiences that are designed specifically for museums and cultural institutions.

All program days will run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Central Standard Time. Lunch and snacks will be provided during the program.

Attendees will also be welcome to attend an evening celebration on Sunday, April 14, 2024, to enjoy food, drinks, community-building, and a speaker.

The first half of each day will be focused on learning. The second half of each day is hands-on implementation time, in which participants work through action steps.

- The Convening will offer learning opportunities that follow three tracks:
  - Community engagement;
  - Internal systems and policies;
  - Program, exhibit, and curriculum development;
- The Convening will focus on a different subject each day:
  - The Past: presenters will share both triumphs and challenges in their history of working through the lens of race over the last several decades.
  - The Present: presenters will focus on the continuing work of the last several years.
  - The Future: presenters will imagine the future of racial justice and anti-racism in the field of cultural institutions, zeroing in on developing practices and perspectives that have demonstrated change.

## [When are applications due?](#)

- Applications Open: Aug. 11, 2023 though Oct. 30, 2023
- Convening: April 15-17, 2024
- Mini-Grant Applications Open: May 2024 through July 2024

Applications for the 2024 Museums Advancing Racial Justice Convening are due Monday, Oct. 30, 2023.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis after this date as space allows.

## [How do I apply?](#)

Note that one person will need to submit the application for the entire team, including all individual narratives.

In order to maximize impact and ensure successful stewardship of the work following the Convening, we are encouraging institutions to send a team of up to three individuals. Individual team members should have a passion for addressing critical issues of race in institutions and can be spread across or focused within hierarchies and departments. Institutions should send employees they see as well-suited to the task and compose a team that they feel will be empowered to carry the work forward in their home institutions.

We encourage teams that are culturally, racially, and economically diverse.

Recruit your team of one to three individuals and confirm their ability to participate in the program. Nominate one of these team members to serve as Team Captain.

Secure approval from your Executive Sponsor.

Teams must name an Executive Sponsor who is the senior executive (CEO, President, or equivalent title) of your organization or a direct report to this individual.

The Executive Sponsor is responsible for having an overall understanding of the effort, making sure that team members have the time to devote to the Convening, and ensuring that the team is empowered to devote time to any desired continuation of work after the Convening, including the stewardship of mini-grant funds.

Your Executive Sponsor can also be a Team Captain or Team Member if they should wish to attend the Convening.

Team Captains must have direct access to the Executive Sponsor and other team members. They will serve as the principal point of contact between your institution and the Science Museum of Minnesota for general issues and questions. The team captain will be responsible for submitting the application, receiving and utilizing funds for flights, meals, and travel, registering for workshops, and submitting your team's mini-grant application, should you choose to apply for funding.



Prepare to submit the following in the application pages that follow:

- Institutional Information
- Team Captain and Executive Sponsor Information
- Individual Narratives for Each Team Member
- A Team Narrative
- A SWOT Analysis
- A Self-Analysis
- A Community Reference
- Visitor Demographics

### [Can I get help with my application?](#)

We will offer two Application Overview webinars and two SWOT Analysis webinars to help applicants as they prepare their applications.

- [Application Overview Recording](#)
- [SWOT Analysis Recording](#)

Recordings of both webinars will be posted to this website after they take place.

### [What content topics can I expect?](#)

The content will be curated to meet the needs of applicants, and more details will be shared when the cohort is selected.

### [What happens afterwards?](#)

Recorded content, tools, and frameworks from the Convening will be available for online access once the event is complete.

Additionally, after the Convening participants will be invited to apply for up to \$10,000 in mini-grant funding to utilize and activate learnings from the Convening at their institution. More information about mini-grants will be shared with participants closer to the Convening.