

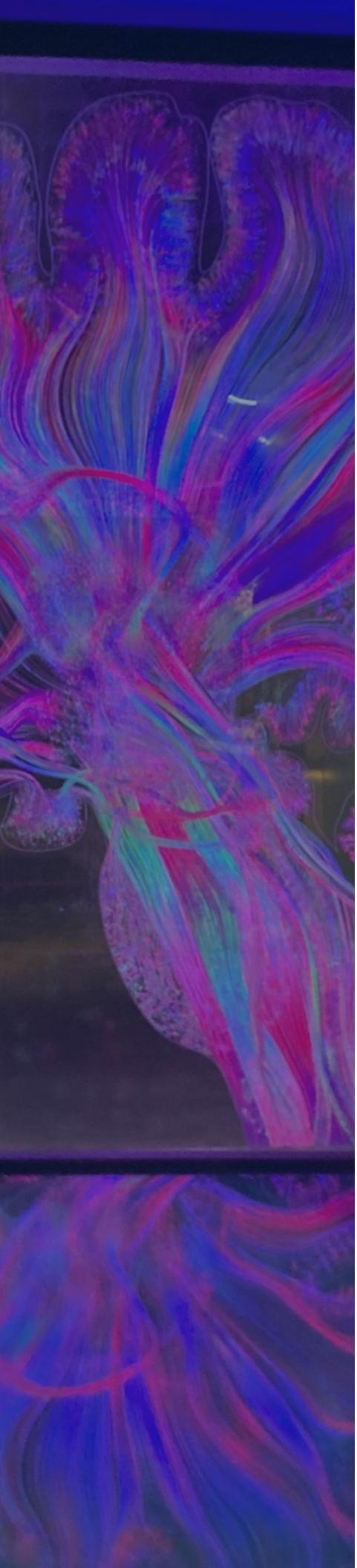


October 28-30, 2025

Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Mid-Atlantic
Association of **Museums**

2025 MAAM ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Pittsburgh, PA



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welcome to MAAM —

MAAM

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Dear Attendees,

Welcome to the 'burgh – the Steel City, City of Bridges, Most Livable City – home of over 90 unique neighborhoods, world class healthcare, the modern steel industry, Heinz Ketchup, and all things black and gold. Whether this is your first MAAM Annual Conference or your tenth, we're delighted you've joined us for a few days of honest conversations and immersive experiences related to all things museums.

As co-chairs of the 2025 Annual Conference, it has been our honor to work alongside so many passionate and talented colleagues. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who submitted proposals for conference sessions. It's been a privilege to get a sneak peek at the creative work happening in museums across our region, and we're eager for you to experience these ideas firsthand.

We'd also like to give a huge shout-out to the Program, Local Arrangements, Awards, and Sponsorship Committee members. These amazing folks have volunteered countless hours to bring this conference to life, ensuring it's as engaging and inspiring as possible. And of course, none of this would be possible without the unwavering support of the MAAM Board members – dedicated professionals from every corner of our region who have contributed in ways both big and small.

Now, let's talk Pittsburgh. We've lined up tours that will take you from vibrant murals to world-class collections, to blast furnaces and a "cathedral". Not to mention, two historic inclines and skyline views thrown in for good measure. Take the time to enjoy a walk through the food options in the nearby Strip District, or explore the neighborhoods that house your pre-conference tours – Oakland, Millvale, Homestead/Swissvale/Rankin for a true "taste" of Pittsburgh. You'll find everything from craft breweries to local shops cuisine from the many ethnicities that literally built, and are still building, America.

We've worked hard to create a program that is thoughtful, useful, and energizing, but your feedback is invaluable. Please share your thoughts through session evaluations, in-person conversations, or any other channels available. Your input helps us continually improve and ensure future MAAM programming meets your needs.

Thank you again for being here. We hope you have an inspiring and memorable time in Pittsburgh – and don't forget to look up now and then; there's a piece of history on every corner of this Rust Belt city.

Melissa Kiewiet

Melissa Kiewiet {New York Representative}
Executive Director,
Dyckman Farmhouse Museum

Nicholas West

MNicholas West
{At-Large Representative}
Co-director, University
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SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

Tuesday, October 28		*Registration Required
9:00 am-5:00 pm	Check-In & Registration	Ballroom Foyer
10:00 am-3:00pm	Pre-Conference Off Site Tours* Pre-registration required	Various Locations
12:00pm-5:00pm	Exhibitor Hall Set Up	Ballroom Foyer
3:00pm-4:15pm	A New Generation of Museum Directors: An Honest Assessment of Challenges and Opportunities *	Ballroom 4
3:00-5:00pm	Designing for Openness: Prototyping Inclusive Museums from the Outside In (Offsite Workshop)*	Children's Museum of Pittsburgh Annex Building
4:15pm-5:15pm	Networking Mixer* Pre-registration required	Ballroom 3
5:30pm-7:30pm	Opening Reception	August Wilson African American Cultural Center
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29		
8:00am-8:45am	Breakfast	Grand Ballroom
8:00am-5:00pm	Check-In & Registration	Ballroom Foyer
8:00am-5:00pm	Exhibitor Hall Open	Ballroom Foyer
9:00am-10:15am	Keynote: Belonging as a Growth Strategy, Sabrina Saunders Mosby	Grand Ballroom
10:15am-10:30am	Coffee Break, Sponsored by Solid Light	Ballroom Foyer
10:15am-12:15pm	Career Headshots	Grand Ballroom
10:30am-11:45pm	Breakout Sessions 1A. Advocacy in Turbulent Times 1B. Brand in Action: Where the Museum Experience Meets the Brand 1C. Climate Communication & Action for Museum Professionals: Co-Creating Confidence, Competence and Joy to tackle the Climate Crisis 1D. Dirty Pop: Historical Musical Instruments, A Seductive Spy & Pop Culture	Various Locations
12:00 pm-1:30 pm	MAAM Meet & Eat, Sponsored by CORIS Monitoring	Grand Ballroom



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29 CONTINUED

1:45pm-3:00pm	Breakout Sessions 2A. Building Stronger Connections: Growing Individual Giving in Museums 2B. Functional to Operational: Creating Mission Statements that Propel Change 2C. The Power of Partnerships: How Building Relationships Can Result in Strong Exhibitions and Stronger Communities 2D. Two Sites, One Story: Building Partnerships for Stronger Interpretation	Various Locations
3:00pm-3:30pm	First-Timers & Friends Coffee Break	Ballroom Foyer
3:00pm-4:00pm	Career Headshots	Grand Ballroom
3:30pm-4:45pm	Breakout Sessions 3A. Choose your own adventure: multisensory approaches to inclusive exhibit design, Sponsored by Gaylord Archival 3B. Cultivating Boldness: Fostering Staff Agency for Innovation 3C. Headwinds and Tailwinds, Sponsored by PA historical Museum Commission 3D. Small Museum, Big Impact: Essential HR on a Budget	Various Locations
5:00pm-6:15pm	Awards Reception , Sponsored by The Frick Pittsburgh Museum & Gardens	Grand Ballroom

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

8:00am-8:45am	Breakfast	Grand Ballroom
8:00am-2:00pm	Exhibitor Hall Open	Ballroom Foyer
8:00am-5:00pm	Conference Check-In & Registration	Ballroom Foyer
9:00am-10:15am	Breakout Sessions 4A. Are Two Heads Really Better Than One? 4B. Heritage Areas: The Opportunity of Cultural Tourism for Funding and Growth 4C. Level Up Your Museum 4D. Strategic Business Decisions in Museums	Various Locations



SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30 CONTINUED

10:30am-11:45am	Affinity Group Meet-Up: Maryland, AAM Focus Group, Student Poster Presentation, Resume Review	Brigade Room
10:30am-1:00pm	The Andy Warhol Museum Tour & Networking Lunch , Lunch self-pay*	The Andy Warhol Museum
12:00pm-1:15pm	Leadership Lunch , by invitation only* Sponsored by the Cooperstown Graduate Program	Grand Ballroom
12:00pm-1:15pm	Lunch on your own	
1:15pm-2:00pm	Career Headshots	Grand Ballroom
1:30pm-2:45 pm	Breakout Sessions 5A. Concept to Reality: Building Museums Starter Guide 5B. Now More Than Ever: DEAI Still Matters 5C. Practical Tips for Unlocking Fundraising Success	Various Locations
2:45 pm-3:00 pm	Coffee Break	Ballroom Foyer
3:00 pm-4:15 pm	Breakout Sessions 6A. Cosmic Collaboration: Designing Immersive, Game-Based Museum Experiences 6B. Making Room for Playful Engagement in Historic Spaces 6C. Open Storage: Building Access Through Digitization and Display 6D. Roundtable Discussion: Resilience and Advocacy in Challenging Times	Various Locations
5:00 pm- 6:30 pm	Closing Mixer at the Moonshot Museum	Moonshot Museum

guest speaker

THE STEPHEN WEIL MEMORIAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Sabrina Saunders Mosby

Belonging as a Growth Strategy: How Creativity Fuels Connection

Wednesday, October 29, 9:00 am

Location: Grand Ballroom



Museums already excel at creativity, innovation, and storytelling but those same talents can also help them build stronger connections with the people they serve. In this keynote, workplace inclusion leader Sabrina Saunders Mosby shares how belonging is more than a feeling; it's a powerful, practical strategy for audience growth, community trust, and institutional resilience. Drawing from lessons in community engagement and organizational culture, Sabrina will help you see how your creative mindset can be applied to the audiences you want to attract, not just the exhibits you design. Through real-world examples and actionable, scalable ideas, you'll leave inspired to deepen your museum's connection to its community and be empowered to invite even more people into your story.

Speaker Biography:

Sabrina Saunders Mosby is the President and CEO of Vibrant Pittsburgh, the region's premier economic development membership organization dedicated to advancing workplace inclusion and supporting employers in attracting, retaining, and elevating talent. Under her leadership, Vibrant Pittsburgh serves more than 50,000 constituents annually, partnering with organizations across sectors to create workplaces where all employees can thrive.

A strategic and visionary executive, Sabrina has held senior leadership roles in nonprofits and spent nearly a decade in public service, working with local and federal stakeholders to strengthen workforce pipelines and expand opportunity. She is recognized for her collaborative, creative, and results-driven approach, inspiring leaders to view inclusion as a growth strategy and a catalyst for innovation.

Widely celebrated for her leadership, Sabrina has been recognized by multiple national and regional outlets and lists honoring influential executives and changemakers. She serves on the boards of Allegheny Health Network, the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, the Pittsburgh Women's Alliance, the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership, and the Pittsburgh Advisory Council of the Federal Reserve Bank of Cleveland; she is also a Board Trustee for Carlow University and serves on the Executive Committee of the National Association of Corporate Directors (NACD) Three Rivers Chapter.

Whether guiding corporate executives, cultural leaders, or community stakeholders, Sabrina offers deep regional expertise, a proven track record for leading change, and actionable insights on building inclusive, resilient communities. She holds an M.S. from Carlow University, a B.A. from Edinboro University, is a graduate of Leadership Pittsburgh, and a TEDx speaker on The Power of Pause. She lives in the Pittsburgh area with her husband, Brandon, and their son, Lincoln.

WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, RECEPTIONS

Networking Mixer: Emerging Leaders in the Museum Field

Tuesday, October 28, 4:15pm-5:15pm
Location: Ballroom 3, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Just heard the panel on emerging museum leaders—or wish you had? Keep the conversation going over light bites! Join fellow attendees for a relaxed networking session where you can swap stories, share challenges, and pick up tips from peers who are navigating the leap into leadership roles.

Note: Pre-registration required—add this session to your personal Sched schedule to sign up.

Opening Reception at the August Wilson African American Cultural Center

Tuesday, October 28, 5:30 pm-7:30 pm
Location: August Wilson African American Cultural Center
Distance from Wyndham: 0.6 miles (13 minute walk)

Join friends and colleagues at MAAM's opening reception at the the August Wilson African American Cultural Center. Enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres as you mingle, make new connections, and catch up with peers from across the museum field. The evening offers a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.

MAAM Meet & Eat

Wednesday, October 29, 12:00 pm-1:30 pm
Location: Grand Ballroom, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Join fellow conference attendees for lunch, conversation, and updates from MAAM leadership. We also introduce both new MAAM board members and our 2025 Fellowship awardees.

Awards Reception

Wednesday, October 29, 5:00pm-6:15pm
Location: Grand Ballroom, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Join in a celebration of the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums 2025 Award Recipients. Light refreshments will be provided.

Sponsored by The Frick Pittsburgh Museum & Gardens



WORKSHOPS, EVENTS, RECEPTIONS, CONTINUED

Thursday, October 30, 10:30am-11:45am

Poster Presentations

Location: Ballroom 3, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Poster Presentations showcase the projects and research by students or groups of students in museum studies programs or related academic programs, focusing on museum-based projects. Come explore projects and initiatives from around the region in an informal setting.

Affinity Group Meet Up: Maryland

Location: Brigade Room, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Join colleagues from across Maryland for an informal gathering to connect, share updates, and discuss current issues affecting museums in the state with an update on state museum funding and advocacy goals for this Session (starting in January 2026). This is a great opportunity to network, exchange ideas, and explore ways to collaborate ahead of the coming year. Convened by the Maryland Museums Association.

Resume Review/Career Conversations

Location: Ballroom 4, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

Do you need advice on making a career change? Need to have someone look over your resume? Bring your career questions and/or resume to our MAAM board members and colleagues and sit and discuss. Open to all career levels.

Sign up for a time. To make the most of the session, please email a copy of your resume to director@midatlanticmuseums.org by October 22. This will allow your reviewer to prepare tailored feedback in advance. We also ask that you bring a printed copy of your resume to the session.

Focus Group: Revising the AAM Code of Ethics for Museums

Location: Rivers, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

American Alliance of Museums (AAM) is launching a multi-year review of its Code of Ethics for Museums (2025–2027) to ensure it reflects the evolving values and responsibilities of today's museum field. Join this focus group to share your perspectives on ethical priorities and challenges facing museums today. Your input will help guide the revision process. This focus group is done in collaboration with graduate students from Carnegie Mellon University supporting the project's research and field engagement.

Leadership Lunch

Thursday, October 30, 12:00pm–1:15pm

Location: Grand Ballroom, Wyndham Grand Pittsburgh Downtown

This **invitation-only lunch** is an opportunity for the 2025 fellowship awardees and emerging leaders to meet with MAAM board members and others to discuss the museum field and their own career aspirations.

Sponsored by Cooperstown Graduate Program

Closing Mixer at the Moonshot Museum*

Thursday, October 30, 5:00 pm–6:30 pm

Location: Moonshot Museum

Conclude the day with a networking reception at the Moonshot Museum. Attendees will have the opportunity to connect with colleagues, enjoy light refreshments, and explore the museum's interactive exhibits. Special thanks to Moonshot Museum, Luci Creative, and RLMG for hosting this reception.

*Pre-registration is required

POSTER PRESENTATIONS

Automotive Museums: Visitor Representation and Audience Engagement

The obsession with the automobile as an object of admiration and technological innovation shaped the script by which automotive museums created their displays and crafted narratives. This script neglects the human element within the system. The discourse of the new museology and growing discontent with the historical presentation of the automotive museum has brought the genre to a crossroad, wherein this study examines the state of the industry. This research, one of the only surveys of automotive museums, aims to establish what communities' automotive museums engage with and if they attempt to address communities outside of their core audience.

Presenter: Cassady Calder, Director, DeBence Antique Music World

Curating Campus: To the People and the Archive

For the commemoration of the centennial of The Duquesne Duke, Duquesne University's student-run newspaper, students enrolled in the Public History courses at Duquesne University were assigned to present an exhibition and create oral history interviews. From the exhibition, strengths and weaknesses emerge in researching a century of newspaper articles, designing an exhibit, and navigating the controversial history of institutional threats to freedom of the press. A different perspective was developed in contrast to the oral history project, which grew out of the exhibition itself, as students work with a more narrow scope of work to interview an editor-in-chief, compared to a broader overview as seen in the exhibition. This poster aims to explore and analyze the differences and the influencing factors in interacting with archival materials that determine their interpretation and public presentation.

Presenter: Agaretha Kosasih, Senior Undergraduate Student, Duquesne University



Here, There be Monsters

This session will explore how the application of monster theory within a cross-comparison framework using 20th century universal horror films and modern-day ones can be used to develop relevant museum programming. The session will explore the possibilities of such programming through how it may appeal to multiple age groups, especially younger audiences, given the universality of popular culture, its continued relevance, and its post-structural nature.

Presenter: Tonette Seitz, Graduate Student, The Cooperstown Graduate Program



POSTER PRESENTATIONS, CONTINUED



Inclusive Futures: Improving Accessibility at the Michael C. Carlos Museum

In 2022 the Michael C. Carlos Museum became the first art museum in the state of Georgia to become certified as sensory inclusive, an important step towards increasing accessibility for neurodiverse visitors. Yet, since then, accessibility efforts in the museum have remained largely stagnant at a time when pursuing sustainable, long-term resources that go beyond mere compliance matters. This presentation will give attendees insight into the digital resources I developed over ten weeks to increase accessibility at the museum. These resources were crafted for a variety of audiences including the general visitor, bus drivers, neurodiverse visitors, and Spanish speakers.

Presenter: Cristal De La Cruz, Graduate Student, The Cooperstown Graduate Program

Walk and Talk: Making a Digital Walking Tour

The Holiday Pride has created Bar Walk: A Walking Tour of Pittsburgh's Gay Bars to preserve Pittsburgh's gay bar history and engage the community. Pittsburgh's bars have a rich history of AIDS activism and drag performances. They were the places where LGBT+ people could find each other and be themselves. Yet, today they are rapidly fading. Pittsburgh's gay bars were passed down from lesbian to gay man and perhaps back again just to preserve these spaces. At one time, there may have been thirty bars running all at once. Now, there are only one or two left. Take a walk and discover what was almost lost to time.

Presenters: Al Preston, Director, The Holiday Pride; Jessie Ames, Graduate Student, Duquesne University; Julian Cerminara, Graduate Student, Duquesne University

Tour: Carrie Blast Furnaces National Historic Landmark

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 | 10:00 am–11:30 am and 1:00pm–2:30pm

Discover one of Pittsburgh's most iconic industrial landmarks during a tour of the Carrie Blast Furnaces. Constructed of 2.5-inch thick steel plate and lined with refractory brick, these furnaces were once part of the region's booming steel industry. Today, the site is part of Rivers of Steel National Heritage Area, offering tours, workshops, exhibitions, and events that celebrate the region's industrial and cultural heritage. Join fellow conference attendees for an unforgettable guided experience that explores the history, technology, and legacy of this National Historic Landmark.

Tour: University of Pittsburgh Nationality and Heritage Rooms & University Art Gallery

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 | 10:00 am–12:00 pm

Experience a captivating behind-the-scenes tour of two of the University of Pittsburgh's most iconic cultural spaces! Participants will visit the renowned Nationality and Heritage Rooms in the Cathedral of Learning. Designed and funded in collaboration with cultural communities from Pittsburgh and around the world, each of the 31 rooms reflects the art, architecture, and traditions of a different nation or culture, offering a powerful lens into Pittsburgh's rich immigrant heritage and global connections.

Attendees will also visit University Art Gallery (UAG), housed in the historic Frick Fine Arts Building. Museum professionals will enjoy a curator-led walkthrough of current exhibitions, including *Wavelengths, Earth and Ether: The Art of Lucille and Virgil Cantini*, and a contemporary art installation in the magnificent Rotunda. Attendees will learn how the UAG and Pitt's Museum Studies program train the next generation of museum professionals.

Tour: Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 | 1:00pm–2:30pm

Join us for an exclusive behind-the-scenes tour of Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens, a leader in sustainability and environmental design. Discover how this historic Pittsburgh institution integrates stunning horticultural displays with cutting-edge green practices.

Tour: Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka

Tuesday, October 28, 2025 | 1:00pm–2:30pm

This tour will introduce participants to the awe-inspiring murals of Croatian artist Maxo Vanka and the stewardship of the Society to Preserve the Millvale Murals of Maxo Vanka. Participants will discover how these striking works, covering the walls and ceiling of the sanctuary of the St. Nicholas Croatian Catholic Church, were painted during two intense periods in 1937 and 1941 and reflect the lived experiences of the church's working-class, immigrant congregation and timeless themes of struggle, sacrifice, faith, and hope. This unique site is at the intersection of history, art, and social justice — there is something for everyone.

Tour: The Andy Warhol Museum Tour & Networking Lunch

Thursday, October 30, 2025 | 10:30am–1:00pm

The experience begins with a guided tour of The Andy Warhol Museum's galleries, led by museum staff, highlighting Warhol's creative process, social impact, and the museum's ongoing commitment to accessibility and inclusion.

Guests will then be welcomed by Mario Rossero, Director of The Andy Warhol Museum, who will share reflections on leadership and community engagement. The visit continues with a networking lunch at The Warhol Café (self-pay), where the Culture and Community Department at Carnegie Museums will lead attendees in conversation and interactive networking bingo. These activities are designed to spark dialogue around art, identity, and inclusive museum practice.



Breakout Session #1

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

10:30 AM - 11:45 AM

1A: Advocacy in Turbulent Times

How does advocacy work when there's so much uncertainty? Since the beginning of 2025 the landscape for cultural institutions has become a battlefield, and museum advocates have responded to calls for action from associations addressing a plethora of threats and attacks. Let's talk about what has happened and what's happening now. We will explore what the near future of museum advocacy may look like and what best practices and success stories have emerged.

Presenters: Rusty Baker, Executive Director, PA Museums

1B: Brand in Action: Where the Museum Experience Meets the Brand

A museum's brand lives in every touchpoint of the museum experience—from exhibitions to frontline staff, digital presence, and even retail. This panel includes a branding agency founder as well as museum marketing and curatorial professionals who will talk about how they bring their brands to life in unexpected and meaningful ways. We'll discuss questions like how can visitor services reflect your values and personality and what does an "on-brand" exhibition experience look like? This panel will offer insights and real-world examples to help you turn your brand into something your audiences can feel at every step of their journey.

Presenters: Jennifer Harrington, CEO & Founder, HATCH; Paul Dien, Chief Marketing Officer, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Kim Jakominich, Director of Marketing & Brand Engagement, Barnes Foundation & Calder Gardens



1C: Climate Communication & Action for Museum Professionals: Co-Creating Confidence, Competence and Joy to tackle the Climate Crisis

This session will share results from Climate Communication & Action for Museum Professionals (C-CAMP), a professional development program focused on climate education and action. We will share select examples, case studies and resources of how different museums have activated their own climate action initiatives in their communities and institutions. We will share our year-long plan along with what worked (and what didn't!) as we tackled how museum culture, organization, programs and experiences are approaching climate change education, communications and action. Participants will create a modified action plan for a current project and leave with strategies and inspiration to implement their ideas.

Presenters: Sarah States, Director of Research and Science Education at the Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens; Jen Kretser, Director of Climate Initiatives at the Wild Center; Mary Ann Steiner, Research Assistant at the University of Pittsburgh Center for Learning in Out of School Environments; Rose Hendricks, Executive Director of Seeding Action at the Association of Science and Technology Centers

1D: Dirty Pop: Historical Musical Instruments, A Seductive Spy & Pop Culture

This panel will explore how pop culture can be leveraged in exhibits, programming, and with museum collection items. Pop culture provides a hook for audience engagement, but how can it be used effectively to not just attract but also educate? Museums can maintain the highest standards of historical accuracy and scholarship while using pop culture to bring in the dynamism to their collections. This session uses Jimi Hendrix's Woodstock Stratocaster, Tupac Shakur's poem "Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death," and more from MOPOP's permanent collection, along with the creation of the 2019 Mata Hari exhibition at the International Spy Museum as case study examples.

Presenters: Jacqueline Eyl, Chief Experience Officer at the KID Museum, Amalia Kozloff, Senior Curator at the Museum of Pop Culture, and Amanda Ohlke, Director of Adult Education at the International Spy Museum

Breakout Session #2

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29

1:45 PM - 3:00 PM

2A: Building Stronger Connections: Growing Individual Giving in Museums

Learn how your museum can build and grow a strong individual giving program. Hear the latest Giving USA data to better understand trends in individual giving across the field. Presenters will share why individual donors matter and give real-world examples of simple steps that all museum staff can take today to grow your program. Topics include: developing sponsorship opportunities for individual donors, creating a case for general operating support, and best practices for donor cultivation and stewardship.

Presenters: Pat Quinn Winter, Consultant from Advancement Advisors; Traci Weatherford-Brown, Senior Director of Museum Advancement at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh; Maddy Rolla, Director of Development, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

2B: Functional to Aspirational: Creating Mission Statements that Propel Change

Explore strategic planning and mission statement development with the Athenaeum of Philadelphia and the Rosenbach Museum & Library. Between 2020 and 2024, both institutions underwent transformative processes, reimagining their mission statements from operational and aspirational perspectives. This session, a case study, offers insights into crafting robust mission statements, addressing challenges, and ensuring alignment across stakeholders. Strong aspirational mission statements empower organizations to navigate cultural shifts, fostering agility and proactive responses to crises. Discover the role of a well-defined mission in building authentic loyalty and trust within communities. Explore the link between aspirational and operational missions, understanding how they shape daily activities.

Presenters: Kelsey Scouten Bates, John C. Haas Director of the Rosenbach at the Rosenbach Museum and Library; Beth Hessel, Executive Director at the Athenaeum of Philadelphia

2C: The Power of Partnerships: How Building Relationships Can Result in Strong Exhibitions and Stronger Communities

How do you create a successful exhibition when your collection has no permanent home? Whether you are a museum looking to branch out with your exhibitions or a collection looking for a temporary home, this session will share how forming mutually beneficial partnerships within your extended community can attract visitors, create publicity opportunities, and tell an impactful story. Using the Atwater Kent Collection (a “museum without walls”) as a case study, attendees will learn how forming local partnerships supports collection stewardship and led to the creation of an award-winning exhibition, programming, and podcast—all on a budget.

Presenters: Dr. Page Talbott, Director of Museum Outreach at Drexel University Lenfest Center for Cultural Partnerships; Megan Semanik, Exhibit Designer for Metcalfe; Gianna Tripodi-Bhise, Director of Foundation and Corporate Relations at WHYY

2D: Two Sites, One Story: Building Partnerships for Stronger Interpretation

The stories museums tell are multifaceted and complex, so can any singular museum really be expected to tell those stories alone? What becomes possible when two organizations team up to interpret the past? Explore the power of partnerships in creating fuller, more holistic interpretation through the case study of two Pittsburgh institutions: Rivers of Steel and the Frick Pittsburgh.

Presenters: Kirsten Paine, Museum Education and Historic Interpretation Manager at Rivers of Steel, and Kelsie Paul, Director of Learning and Visitor Experience at the Frick Pittsburgh

Breakout Session #3

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29 3:30 PM-4:45 PM

3A: Choose your own adventure: multisensory approaches to inclusive exhibit design

How can museums welcome visitors of different backgrounds and abilities, and offer choices for how to access information in multiple ways? This session will feature case studies spanning more than a decade of inclusive design practice at diverse institutions. Practitioners will share learnings from creating interfaces for multisensory and multimodal ways to explore the content of exhibits, inspired by universal design principles. Recognizing that accessibility is not one-size-fits-all, this session will include case studies featuring different collections, content, settings, budgets, and approaches to accessibility. This nuts-and-bolts session will offer practical insights for making museum experiences more accessible and engaging for all, from design, collections, programming, and accessibility experts who have worked in a variety of informal learning environments.

Presenters: Blair Chisholm, Interactive Producer at Quatrefoil Associates; Anne Fullerkamp, Senior Director of Creative Experiences at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh; Alexandra Simakowicz, Senior Historic Program Specialist at the Morris County Park Commission; Danielle Linzer, Senior Director of Education, Learning, & Research, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh; Cheryl Fogle-Hatch, Founder, Museum Senses LLC

3B: Cultivating Boldness: Fostering Staff Agency for Innovation

Failure is a tough pill to swallow, and the fear of it can stifle innovation and risk-taking. While we champion agency in our learners, how effectively do we cultivate it within our own museum staff? KID Museum, dedicated to equipping children with the skills to meet the challenges of a complex world, recognized the need to empower our team to be equally bold. This workshop will explore strategies for fostering a staff culture that embraces audacious problem-solving and transforming setbacks into stepping stones. Learn how to build a workplace where experimentation thrives and innovation is a lived experience.

Presenters: Jacqueline Eyl, Chief Experience Officer at the KID Museum; Savannah Fetterolf, Senior Manager of Teaching at the KID Museum

3C: Headwinds and Tailwinds: A panel discussion about the financial and operational impacts on the Museum and Arts Management Field

Museums and arts organizations are navigating turbulent landscapes marked by financial and operational challenges, staffing model changes, inflation and shifting audience behaviors while also benefiting from unexpected tailwinds like increased digital capacity, evolving leadership models and public awareness of the sector's value. This panel brings together leaders from across the nonprofit, arts and museum fields to explore how institutions are adapting to these crosswinds. Panelists will share insights from diverse perspectives, including finance, operations, community engagement and technology strategies. Attendees will leave with a clearer understanding of sector-wide trends, adaptive strategies, and practical tools for resilience and growth.

Presenters: Dr. Brett Ashely Crawford, Teaching Professor of Arts Management at Carnegie Mellon University; Hayley Haldeman, Chief Administrative Officer at the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust; Christine Koebley, Senior Director Finance and Administration, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh

3D: Small Museum, Big Impact: Essential HR on a Budget

Small museums rely on great people but building strong HR practices can feel out of reach without dedicated resources. This practical workshop offers tools and strategies to help museum leaders strengthen hiring, onboarding, compliance, and employee engagement. Participants will learn how to assess current practices, prioritize what matters most, and implement effective HR solutions tailored to small teams.

Presenters: Melissa Kiewiet, Executive Director, Dyckman Farmhouse Museum Alliance; Sara Whitman, Founder, At The Start; Sarah Sanzari, HR Consultant, At The Start

Breakout Session #4

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

9:00AM-10:15AM

4A: Are Two Heads Really Better Than One? Pros and Cons of Co-Leadership in Museums

Have you considered co-leadership in your organization as a way to divide and conquer your mission and workload? In this session, two Co-Executive Directors will share their experience navigating this new management structure within their organization to help you decide if it might be a good fit. A third presenter, a staff member of the same organization, will share her experience working under two directors. Finally, an activity will invite you to consider how you could apply this model to your own organization.

Presenters: Aaron Hollis Jr, Co-Executive Director, West Overton Village & Museum; Patrick Bochy, Co-Executive Director, West Overton Village & Museum; Pam Curtin, Director of Visitor Engagement, West Overton Village & Museum

4B: Heritage Areas: The Opportunity of Cultural Tourism for Funding and Growth

Your museum may be eligible for financial support and technical assistance by simply being located in a State Heritage Area! State Heritage Areas are unique to the Mid-Atlantic (Maryland, Pennsylvania, and New York). They are discrete areas of targeted cultural tourism investment that can greatly benefit historic, cultural, artist, and/or recreational assets. Are you in a Heritage Area? Now is the time to find out and maximize the opportunity that cultural tourism offers for funding and growth for your museum. Regardless of your Heritage Area status, panelist will discuss grantmaking, partnerships, and cultural tourism marketing for museums.

Presenters: Meg Baco (Speakers), Maryland Museums Association, Board Chair; Jennifer Burden, Director of Cultural Resources, National Road Heritage Corridor; Shauntee Daniels, Executive Director, Baltimore National Heritage Area; Lucille Walker, Executive Director, Southern Maryland National Heritage Area

4C: Level Up Your Museum: Play to Enhance Community Engagement

This hands-on workshop explores how cultural organizations and institutions can amplify how they serve their communities by implementing play and playfulness into their programming, fundraising, or operations. Participants will engage in a creative challenge where small groups invent and iterate upon something new based on a revealed set of criteria. To guide this collaborative process, participants will learn about game design best practices through existing games, practical resources, and project case studies. There will also be time for everyone to review outputs and reflect – both essential components to game-based learning – to make sense of the experience and draw connections to their own initiatives (past, current, or future).

Presenters: Margaret Sheble, Archive Distribution Specialist, Educational Video Center; Peter Williamson, Game Designer and Facilitator, Game Genius and Barometer XP

4D: Strategic Business Decisions in Museums: Balancing Internal Resources, Outsourcing, and Shared Service Models

Join us for a vital discussion on how museums can thrive through strategic business decisions. As AI advances and 75% of CPAs near retirement, nonprofits face increasing complexity and talent shortages. This session explores solutions like outsourcing, internal teams, and shared services in finance, IT, and HR. We'll examine how these models can boost efficiency, sustainability, and service quality – helping your museum adapt and lead in a changing world. Learn how operational strategy can be a powerful tool for institutional success.

Presenters:

Alaine Arnott, National Liberty Museum, President & CEO; Jeremiah Marks, Co-Founder, RADAR Nonprofit Solutions; Adam Padron, Co-Founder, Grunkey Industries

Breakout Session #5

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

1:30PM-2:45PM

5A: Concept to Reality: Building Museums Starter Guide

Is your organization considering a new strategic plan, capital campaign, or master planning work? Questions on project budgeting, hiring an architect, or where to start with building systems upgrades? This panel and conversation will focus on the variety of topics that are presented at the annual Building Museums conference. Hear from our panelists as we share case studies and conference highlights, and discuss the complexities of revitalizing, building, and expanding museum spaces. Building Museums™ is an annual international symposium created, produced and managed by the Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums (MAAM) and is open to everyone with an interest in this important topic.

Presenters: David Searles, Partner, JacobsWyper Architects; Averie Shaughnessy-Comfort, Executive Director, Presque Isle Light Station; Nicholas West, Co-director and Curator, Picker Art Gallery; Beth Van Why, Project Executive, Becker & Frondorf

5B: Now More Than Ever: DEAI Still Matters

Embracing diversity, championing equity, advocating for accessibility, and insisting on inclusion in today's environment still matter. Dwindling budgets, confusing commands, fear, and conflicting opinions within and without museum walls have kneecapped the ability of many museums to follow through with their stated desires. In this frank and supportive session, museum practitioners across departments and job spans will learn how to navigate specific contemporary museum DEAI challenges with grace and aplomb, and will be encouraged to move forward with confidence.

Presenters: Cecile Shellman, Consultant, Cecile Shellman Consulting

5C: Practical Tips for Unlocking Fundraising Success

Raising funds for a small museum can be challenging, but with the right approach, even limited resources can make a big impact. This session, led by two seasoned museum professionals, will look at two sides of fundraising, practical tips and tricks to support the day-to-day work, as well as how strategic planning, board development, community engagement, and bold vision can turn ambitious goals (a capital campaign) into a transformative reality. Whether you're hoping to scale up your annual giving or plan for a future capital campaign, this session offers practical insights, lessons learned, and inspiring takeaways to elevate your financial support and sustain your museum's mission.

Presenters: Ainslie Brosig, Executive Director at the expERIEnce Children's Museum; Nora Venezky, President, Small Museum Association; Anne R. Townsend, Principal, ART + Strategy



Breakout Session #6

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 30

3:00PM-4:15PM

6A: Cosmic Collaboration: Designing Immersive, Game-Based Museum Experiences

Room: Moonshot Museum

Moonshot Museum reimagines how museums can blend immersive design with flexibility to meet today's educational and financial challenges. This panel brings together Moonshot Museum, Luci Creative, and RLMG to explore how a versatile, evergreen, gamified design has empowered the museum to continuously adapt—offering fresh narratives, real-time STEAM content, and interactive programming. From watching real spacecraft being built to role-playing lunar entrepreneurs, visitors return again and again for new challenges. Learn how thoughtful exhibit planning, flexible tech, and mission-aligned staffing models enable Moonshot to expand offerings, and inspire collaboration through meaningful, scalable innovation.

Presenters: Jimyse L. Brown, Executive Director, Moonshot Museum; Kiah Shapiro, Managing Director, Luci Creative; Andrew Wilson, Senior Producer, RLMG; Mike Hennessy, Manager of Learning and Programs, Moonshot Museum

6B: Making Room for Playful Engagement in Historic Spaces

It is a challenge to keep artifact-based collections feeling new and interesting to children and youth who take digital content for granted and crave hands-on experiences, especially when budgets are tight and the latest technology is changing quickly. Children's museums can be places for inspiration and guidance for other museums who are considering ways to make exhibit galleries more interactive, engaging and playful. In this session, Soldier and Sailors Memorial Hall and Children's Museum of Pittsburgh will use their recent collaboration as a jumping off point to discuss ways to reimagine existing facilities and exhibition content for young audiences.

Presenters: Anne Fullenkamp, Senior Director of Creative Experiences, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh; Joy Cottrill, Senior Exhibit Designer, Children's Museum of Pittsburgh; Lisa Terrano, Collections Manager, Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum

6C: Open Storage: Building Access Through Digitization and Display

Determined to bring artifacts and object-based learning to the forefront of storytelling, National Building Museum staff began an ambitious plan to digitize the Museum's 500,000 artifact collection and create a permanent open storage gallery. By combining several smaller cataloging & digitizing projects, the Collections Department was able to bring together seemingly disparate funding sources and collections-based needs to make this plan a reality. Through creatively inspiring leadership buy-in, staff transformed an outdated gallery space into Visible Vault, which opened in December 2024 with 3,000 displayed artifacts and 90,000+ searchable online.

Presenters: Nancy Bateman, Senior Registrar and Director of Collections, National Building Museum; Bryn Cooley, Collections Manager, National Building Museum



6D: Roundtable Discussion: Resilience and Advocacy in Challenging Times

Museums today face political, social, and financial pressures that test resilience and mission. This roundtable offers a space for open conversation on strategies for advocacy, supporting staff, and navigating external challenges. With guided prompts and shared experiences, participants will exchange ideas and practical approaches in a relaxed, peer-driven format.

Presenters: Sean Blinn, Consultant, Independent Museum Professional; Nicholas West, Co-director and Curator, Picker Art Gallery; Deborah Schwartz, Consulting Advisor, Deborah A. Schwartz Consulting