

ASMD 2026 DIRECTORS FORUM
ST. PAUL, MN
February 10-12, 2026
Logistics and Preliminary Program (11-13-2025)

LOGISTICS

Dates and Travel

The Association of Science Museum Directors 2026 Directors Forum will be held in St. Paul, MN from Monday, February 9 (travel day and optional evening gathering) through Thursday, February 12 (meeting ends in early afternoon so late afternoon or evening flights home are possible or you may choose to stay another night(s) at the hotel and depart on Feb. 13 or later). Arrange your flights to the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (airport code: MSP) and take ground transportation to the conference hotel via taxi, Uber, or Lyft.

Conference Hotel

The conference hotel is the new Courtyard Marriott Downtown (150 Smith Avenue North, St. Paul, MN, 55102). ASMD has a hotel room block with a rate of \$177 per night for single or double rooms with one \$15 breakfast voucher per room per night. Room rates apply for three days prior and three days after the meeting. The cut-off date for reservations is January 10, 2026. Follow this link to make reservations online: <https://www.marriott.com/event-reservations/reservation-link.mi?id=1754320603239&key=GRP&app=resvlink>

To make reservations with a reservations agent call: 651-204-4050 and ask for the ASMD Rate of \$177.00 per night (group: ASMAMK) to get in our hotel block at our rate. Please make your hotel reservations as soon as possible so we can modify our hotel block if needed.



2026 Forum Hosts

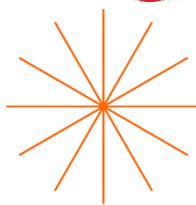
Meeting Hosts: Alison Rempel Brown, President and CEO, Science Museum of Minnesota, St. Paul, MN, and Holly Menninger, Executive Director, Bell Museum, St. Paul, MN



2026 Forum Sponsors

Levy

[Levy](#), SMM Reception and Dinner



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[IMPACTS Experience](#), SMM event expenses

Other Sponsors: TBD

Program Committee

ASMD President: William Harris, Space Center Houston, TX; ASMD Vice Presidents Denise Young (North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences, Raleigh, NC, and Elizabeth Pierce, Cincinnati Museum Center, Cincinnati, OH; ASMD Secretary-Treasurer Jason Cryan, Natural

History Museum of Utah, Salt Lake, City, ASMD Immediate Past President Joe Keiper, Virginia Museum of Natural History, Martinsville, VA; ASMD Executive Director Bonnie Styles, Springfield, IL, and Co-Hosts Alison Rempel Brown and Holly Menninger

PRELIMINARY PROGRAM

Monday, February 9, 2026

5:00-7:00 p.m. Optional Informal Gathering in Courtyard Marriott Hotel Bar

- Light appetizers and refreshments (Members cover their own costs; some snacks and drinks may be provided)
- Casual networking opportunity
- Members are on their own for dinner. You may choose to eat in the hotel restaurant or walk or take public transportation to another venue.

Tuesday, February 10, 2026

7:00-8:00 Breakfast in the Hotel (\$15 Breakfast Voucher included in your registration)

8:00 a.m. Walk or Take Uber/Lyft to Science Museum of Minnesota (120 W Kellogg Blvd, St. Paul, MN 55102)

It's about a 9-minute walk outside (0.4 miles)



8:30-9:30 a.m. Welcome from ASMD President William Harris, President and CEO, Space Center Houston, (image below) and Conference Co-Host Alison Rempel Brown, President and CEO, Science Museum of Minnesota (pictured above)



William Harris

Theme for the Day: Reinvention

8:45-9:30 a.m. Icebreaker with the SMM's IDEAL Center (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access, and Leadership Professional Development)

Activity Leaders

- **Joseph Adamji**, Sr. Director of the SMM's Center for Equity and Systems Change (pictured below) and IDEAL Center Staff



9:30 a.m. Panel on the Value Proposition of Traveling Exhibits

Join our three panelists as they explore how science museums are rethinking the traveling exhibit business model—seeking more financially sustainable approaches that balance mission-driven content with operational resilience.

Panelists:

- **Amber Stevenson**, Senior Director of Traveling Exhibits and Exhibit Sales, Science Museum of Minnesota (image on left below)
- **Jessica Turgeon**, Vice President of Museum Experience, Minnesota Children's Museum (image in center below)
- **Ray Giang**, Partner, ProFun (<http://profun.com>) (image on right below)



10:30 a.m.-10:45 a.m. Break

10:45-12:30 p.m. SMM Exhibit Shop Tour and *RACE: Are We So Different?* Exhibit Experience Preview

SMM Exhibit Shop Tour

Discover the creative and collaborative process behind the scenes of exhibit design—where ideas come to life. As you tour the exhibit production shop (image below), you will see how teams blend storytelling, design, fabrication, and interactivity to create engaging museum experiences. Learn how exhibits are crafted to spark curiosity, capture attention, and foster joyful, meaningful connections for visitors of all ages.



Tour Leaders:

- **Ben Meir**, Exhibits Shop Manager (image on left below)
- **Aaron Schmoll**, Sr. Director of Exhibits (image on right below)



Race: Are We So Different? Exhibit Experience Preview Guide:

- **Alison Rempel Brown**, President and CEO, Science Museum of Minnesota, will guide participants to the exhibition for a 30-minute self-guided exploration. This introductory experience offers a taste of the exhibition's themes, providing context and reflection ahead of the afternoon session on developing inclusive experiences for audiences as illustrated through the *RACE: Are We So Different?* Exhibit (image below). Participants will gain a first-hand sense of the exhibit's storytelling and impact, setting the stage for the deeper conversation about how the museum creates inclusive and thought-provoking experiences.



12:30-1:30 p.m. Catered Lunch by Levy at SMM (covered by registration fee)

1:00-2:30 p.m. Developing Inclusive Experiences for Audiences: *RACE: Are We So Different?* Exhibit Experience

Join us for a reflective conversation on the origins and iterations of *RACE: Are We So Different?*—and how this groundbreaking exhibition has shaped the Science Museum of Minnesota's identity. Through the lens of the Center for Equity and Systems Change, we'll explore its shift to a permanent installation and how it reflects the museum's reinvention and response to today's political and cultural landscape.

Conversation Leads:

- **Joanne Jones-Rizzi**, Vice President, Science, Equity, and Education (image below)
- **Joseph Adamji**, Sr. Director for the Center for Equity and Systems Change (previously shown)



2:30-2:45 p.m. Break

2:45-4:15 p.m. Collections Vault Tour and Labs Open House

Collections Tour

Step behind the scenes of the museum and uncover the 2 million items that bring SMM's research and exhibits to life. On this exclusive tour, the Collections Services Stewardship Department will reveal how artifacts and specimens are carefully preserved, documented, and interpreted. Discover the stories behind the objects, explore the meticulous care that protects

their integrity, and gain a rare glimpse into the research, archival materials, and expertise that power SMM research, exhibits and programs. This is your chance to see the museum from the inside out and experience the heart of our collections like never before.

Collection Tour Leaders

- **Rebecca Newberry**, Director of Collections Stewardship (image below)
- **Collections Stewardship Staff**





Lab Open House (Anthropology, Biology, Paleontology)

Discover the laboratories where museum scientists turn on the science. Explore extraordinary collections of anthropology, from intricately decorated pottery made by the area's earliest residents to vibrant Maya textiles; marvel at biological specimens, including mammals, birds, insects, and aquatic invertebrates; and encounter the prehistoric world through dinosaur fossils from Minnesota and Wyoming, Paleocene treasures from North Dakota's Wannagan Creek, and a fascinating variety of plant and invertebrate fossils. Witness how these remarkable objects fuel research and inspire the museum's exhibits, offering a rare glimpse into the science behind the stories.

Lab Open House Guides

- SMM Staff

4:15-5:15 p.m. ASMD Business Meeting for Members Only; others may explore the Museum

5:30 -7:30 p.m. Reception and Dinner Sponsored by Levy



Dinner MC

- Alison Rempel Brown, President and CEO, Science Museum of Minnesota

7:30 p.m. Walk or take Uber or Lyft back to Conference Hotel

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

7:00-8:00 Breakfast in the Hotel (\$15 Breakfast Voucher included in your registration)

8:00 a.m. Board Bus to Travel to the Bell Museum (2088 Larpenteur Ave. W., St. Paul, MN 55113)

Gather in the lobby area at the main entrance and be ready to board the bus at 8:00 a.m.



8:30 a.m. Bell Museum: Welcome from ASMD President William Harris, President and CEO, Space Center Houston and Forum Co-Host Holly Menninger, Executive Director, Bell Museum

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. *On Native Land* Experience

The Bell Museum co-created and launched a new field trip experience, called [On Native Land](#), for students grades 3-7 focused on Indigenous ecological and astronomical knowledge, in collaboration with Dakȟóta and Ojibwe knowledge keepers, educators, first language speakers and scholars, and artists (image below).



Background and Context for the *On Native Land* Program

- **Natalie Kennedy**, Bell's Director of Statewide Engagement (image below) and **Staff**



Following context setting about the program, we'll walk and talk with the Bell's *On Native Land* program staff through the museum galleries to learn about Minnesota biomes through Dakhóta or Ojibwe perspectives, make earth-sky connections, and partake in hands-on learning. We'll come back together as a group for questions and conversation.

Walk and Talk Leaders:

- **Bell Museum *On Native Land* Program Staff**



Conversation Leaders:

- **Natalie Kennedy and *On Native Land* Program Staff**

12:00-1:00 p.m. Break and Lunch by Native Harvest Catering (covered by ASMD Registration fee)

1:00-2:30 p.m. Grand Challenges Facing Museums

We will bring back our stellar panel and the format followed at our 2025 Directors Forum (image below) for a discussion of the grand challenges museums are currently facing. There will be ample time for questions and discussion by participants.

Panelists:

- **Moderator: William Harris**, ASMD President and President and CEO, Space Center Houston (on right in image)
- **Marilyn Jackson**, President and CEO of AAM (in center in image)
- **Christofer Nelson**, President and CEO of ASTC (on left in image)



2:30-3:30 p.m. New Models for Successful Fundraising

Challenging economic conditions, uncertainty in the government funding landscape, and shifts in the philanthropy landscape call for creativity and innovation in fundraising for the museum and non-profit sectors. Join us in conversation with a panel of thought leaders to explore new models and share stories and strategies for success in fundraising strategies under challenging economic conditions.

Panelists:

Paul Johnson, Founder and CEO, Creative Fundraising Advisors (on left in image below) <https://creativefundraisingadvisors.com/team-members/paul-johnson/>

- **Scott Schuster**, Vice President, Philanthropy, Cincinnati Museum Center (on right in image below) <https://www.cincymuseum.org/meet-our-leadership-team/>
- University of Minnesota Foundation fundraiser with expertise in launching successful campaigns (TBD)



3:30-4:30 p.m. Explore the Bell Museum Galleries

Explore other exhibitions, including the *Imagine the Future* gallery (image below), which focuses on climate and climate action, centering Minnesota voices.



Gallery Exploration Guides

- Bell Museum Staff

4:30-5:30 p.m. Happy Hour in the Bell's Launch Pad and Planetarium Screening

Gather outside the Whitney and Elizabeth Planetarium for adult and other beverages. Following this reception, we will enter the Planetarium (image below) for a special screening of *Secrets From a Forest* (second image below). This internationally award-winning, Bell original planetarium production, tells the story of the relationship between nature and art through the exquisite and rare Stradivarius Violin.





5:30-7:30 p.m. Sponsored Dinner in Horizon Hall, Bell Museum

Dinner MC

- **Holly Menninger**, Executive Director, Bell Museum

7:30 p.m. Board the Bus to return to the Courtyard Marriott hotel.

Thursday, February 12, 2026 (partial day)

7:00-8:00 Breakfast in the Hotel (\$15 Breakfast Voucher included in your registration)

8:00 a.m. Board Bus to Travel to the Science Museum of Minnesota

Gather in the lobby area at the main entrance and be ready to board the bus at 8:00 a.m. Bring your luggage if you are planning to go to the airport on the bus after our field trip.

8:30 a.m. Science Museum of Minnesota: Welcome from ASMD President William Harris, President and CEO Space Center Houston, and Alison Rempel Brown, President and CEO, Science Museum of Minnesota, and time for some coffee.

8:45-9:45 a.m. Fireside Chat on The Heart of How We Lead

This chat will focus on integrating emotional aspects with professional development to help team performance and work culture and achieve audacious goals.

Fireside Chat Participants:

- **Craig Ross**, Chief Impact Officer, Verus Global (<https://verusglobal.com/>) (image below) and co-author of *Do Big Things: The Simple Steps Teams Can Make to Mobilize Hearts and Minds, and Make an Epic Impact*
- **William Harris**, ASMD President and President and CEO, Space Center Houston



9:45 a.m. Parting Comments from Alison Rempel Brown, President and CEO, Science Museum of Minnesota, and Brief Break

10:00 a.m. Board Bus for Field Trip to Blue Rhino Studio (a 20-minute drive)

10:30 a.m. Visit to Blue Rhino Studio (3277 Sun Drive, Eagan, MN 55121)

Blue Rhino Studio specializes in interpretive design and artistic fabrication for museum, visitor center, and zoological environments. This 16,000 square foot facility in Eagan, Minnesota is home to a tightly-knit creative team of skilled artists and craftsmen. They work in a wide range of styles, producing 2 and 3-dimensional pieces on any detail level, and diverse exhibits that include sculpture, mural, carpentry and metal work with their full-time in-house staff (<https://rhinocentral.com>).

Blue Rhino Studios Visit Guides

- **Tim Quady, Owner, Blue Rhino Studios (image below), and Staff**



Blue Rhino Studios made the woolly mammoth for the Bell Museum exhibit (pictured below).



12:00 p.m. Board Bus for Minneapolis Airport and Return to Conference Hotel

Board bus for a drop off at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport (an 11-minute drive from the Studio) for those departing or the return trip to the Conference Hotel for those staying another night.

12:11 p.m. Bus Arrives at Airport and Drops Off Departing Participants

12:30 p.m. Bus Departs from Airport for drive to Courtyard Marriott in St. Paul (a 16-minute drive).

1:00 p.m. Bus Arrives at Courtyard Marriott in St. Paul and the 2026 Directors Forum Ends!

Enjoy lunch and free time on your own. Arrange for a cab, Lyft, or Uber to the Airport when you depart.