Oakland Museum of California Selected by the American Alliance of Museums for Participation in Groundbreaking National Initiative to Increase Diversity and Inclusion on Museum Boards

OAKLAND, CA – August 7, 2019 – The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) has been selected by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) to participate in "Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion." This unprecedented national initiative to diversify museum boards and leadership is taking place across 5 U.S. cities and includes a cross-section of museums of all types and sizes.

Backed by $4 million in grants from three foundations (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Alice L. Walton Foundation, and Ford Foundation), Facing Change: Advancing Museum Board Diversity & Inclusion, will provide the framework, training, and resources for museum leaders to build inclusive cultures within their institutions that more accurately reflect the communities they serve.

“Building a more inclusive museum field is achievable only with museums trustees and leaders committed to long-term change and improvement,” said Laura Lott, president and CEO of the American Alliance of Museums. “Museum boards, in particular, set the tone for their institutions and are well positioned to be agents of change. We commend the museum directors and trustees who have committed to this program for investing in their own operations and serving as models for all museums.”

“The Oakland Museum of California is committed to diversity, equity, inclusion, and access at every level of our organization, from programming and audience development, to staff and Board capacity-building,” said Lori Fogarty, director and CEO of the Oakland Museum of California. “The OMCA Board, which comprises 40% people of color, has been advancing this commitment for a number of years, and is looking forward to taking the next step in furthering this effort in collaboration with the broader museum field. We are most grateful to AAM and the Mellon, Walton and Ford Foundations for making possible this vital national effort through the Facing Change initiative.”

Earlier this year, as part of the Facing Change initiative, AAM announced an Excellence in DEAI Task Force charged with developing recommendations to embed diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion more deeply into AAM’s excellence programs. AAM also named ten DEAI fellows who will work with AAM to implement trainings and support the museum boards in developing sustainable and measurable inclusion plans.
The Need for Action

AAM’s field-wide diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) initiative responds to extensive and multi-year research that underscores the need and desire for change.

In 2017, AAM and BoardSource examined museum board leadership and found a disconnect in the area of diversity and inclusion. The survey revealed that nearly half (46 percent) of museum boards are entirely white, 77 percent of museum directors believe expanding the racial and ethnic diversity of their boards is important to advancing their missions, but only 10 percent of museum boards have developed a plan of action to become more inclusive.

A recent survey by the Mellon Foundation demonstrated that employment in the US museum sector does not reflect the makeup of the communities these institutions serve, despite decades of local and national efforts.

About the American Alliance of Museums
The American Alliance of Museums has been bringing museums together since 1906, helping to develop standards and best practices, gathering and sharing knowledge, and providing advocacy on issues of concern to the entire museum community. Representing more than 35,000 individual museum professionals and volunteers, institutions, and corporate partners serving the museum field, the Alliance stands for the broad scope of the museum community. For more information, visit www.aam-us.org.

About the Oakland Museum of California
The Oakland Museum of California (OMCA) tells the many stories that comprise California, creating the space and context for greater connection, trust, and understanding between people. Through its inclusive exhibitions, public programs, educational initiatives, and cultural events, OMCA brings Californians together and inspires greater understanding about what our state’s art, history, and natural surroundings teach us about ourselves and each other. With more than 1.9 million objects, OMCA brings together its multi-disciplinary collections of art, history, and natural science with the first-person accounts and often untold narratives of California, all within its 110,000 square feet of gallery space and seven-acre campus. The Museum will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2019 as a leading cultural institution of the Bay Area and a resource for the research and understanding of California’s dynamic cultural and environmental heritage for visitors from the region, the state, and around the world.