MESC 2016 Pilot Programming Report

Museum Educators of Southern California (MESC) implemented a pilot programming model that invited members to plan and execute programs between January – May 2016. Previous to the pilot programming, MESC historically offered four programs per year: a fall institute, winter program, spring program, and Annual Institute in June. This programming calendar proved to be a strain on the volunteer board of directors and attendance to programs in recent years had become inconsistent. The pilot programming model was initiated to create space for MESC to experiment with implementing programming ideas brought up in the series of member focus groups conducted in 2015 to determine the needs and desires of MESC members. The board of directors facilitated members producing the pilot programs while focusing on strategic planning for the organization. This report documents the efforts and process of the pilot programming and should be used as a reference as MESC continues to move forward with its organizational transformation.

The following text was included in all pilot program member emails and read by program chairs at events to share the purpose of the pilot programming:

> *MESC is dedicated to strengthening the field and practice of museum education through on-going dialogue and professional development. In order to continue this work and be responsive to the needs of the field, MESC is transforming. All of the 2016 MESC spring programs are a part of a member-driven pilot programming model.*
>
> *The goals of the pilot programming model are to empower MESC members to initiate conversations about what is important to their work, to experiment and assess different ways of organizing events, and to inform the transformation of MESC. The successes, failures, and lessons from the pilot programming model will provide information for MESC to understand how to facilitate a learning community for museum educators in Southern California.*
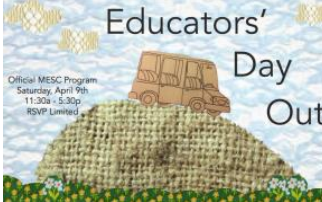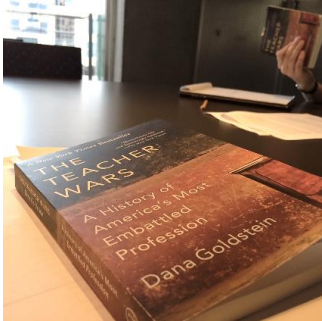
TIMELINE OF PILOT PROGRAMMING

June 2015 Annual Institute	• Members were surveyed about the programming they wanted, what resources they could contribute to programs, and invited to volunteer as program chairs
September 2015 Pilot Program Orientation	• Program chairs reviewed data analysis from Annual Institute survey (See Attachment A) • Program chairs were asked to submit program plans by December 15, 2015 and submit program reflections by May 31, 2016 via Google Forms (See Attachment B) • The group decided to communicate through Google Groups, which failed as a communication platform.
January 2016 Program Chair Meeting	• Program chairs discussed how the MESC Focus Group Findings should be considered in their program planning • Program plans were workshopped by the group

	• The group collaboratively designed the post-program survey and Annual Institute
January – May 2016 Pilot Programming	• The board announced to membership that pilot programs would be free to members unless otherwise stated • Event pages were created on MESC website • "Program Guidelines" were shared with program chairs through Google Drive; the document included links to other documents, Google Forms, and folders needed for program implementation • Programs were promoted through MESC email, LACultureNet, ArtsEdRoundtable, and program chairs; program chairs shared images for their program promotion through Google Drive • Members RSVP'd to programs through a Google Form • Program chairs submitted final attendance list the day after their program for the board to send post-program survey to attendees
June 2016 Pilot Program Meeting	• Program chairs shared reflections and feedback on pilot program model and designed the agenda for the Annual Institute • Program chairs reviewed data from post-program surveys
June 2016 Annual Institute	• Program chairs shared their experiences and lessons learned in breakout groups and as a panel

PILOT PROGRAMS

	#community: Museum Edu January 29, February 26, April 29, various coffee shops around LA Attendance: 8-12 Rebekah Harding, Carolina Zataray, and Katherine Krieger led informal discussions to cultivate a community of museum educators across Los Angeles through their series, #community: Museum Ed. Meeting every last Friday of the month, participants tapped into the vast shared network of other museum professionals to discuss current projects, best practices, and new challenges.
	National Museum Mash-up Gallery Teaching Experiment February 4, The Getty Villa Attendance: 30 (26 of attendees were Getty docents) Lisa Davis facilitated this program that provided an opportunity for gallery teachers, museum educators, artists, and art lovers to refresh our gallery teaching practice by connecting with works of art in new and inventive ways with an emphasis on experimentation, play, and, as one participant phrased it, "to fail gloriously."
	Whaddaya Gonna do About it? February 29, Autry Museum of the American West Attendance: 10

After feeling frustrated by the problems affecting the museum field, Carolina Zataray and Katherine Krieger took action through their session, "Whaddaya Gonna Do About It?" Participants identified problems plaguing their institutions and then brainstormed possible solutions and created road maps to solve their problems.

Excellence and Equity: Then, Now, Next
March 4, The Getty Center
Attendance: 7

This program was planned and executed by committee chair Erin Branham, and committee members Kelly Williams, Christine Spier, and Manny Guardado. Participants were invited to view the two part AAM webinar Excellence and Equity: Then, Now, Next originally broadcast live in 2009 and discuss the webinar in the context of the current climate of museum education.

The Case for Education
April 8, University Art Museum, CSULB
Attendance: 8

Christina Alegria was intrigued by the changing focus on museum engagement and concerned that some museums have eliminated education departments. She organized a panel of Long Beach museum, civic and administrative educators who presented ways in which their institutions are embracing evolving strategies and making the case for education.

Educators' Day Out
April 9, Mini-van, various locations
Program Fee: $20 (to offset cost of van and lunch)
Attendance: 6

Family-style adventure road tripping to three secret locations across LA. A chance for museum educators to play, explore, and be reminded of the true nature of experience. Hanna Mesraty and Rebekah Harding organized adventures to three locations with three very unique activities.

MESC Critical Reading: The Teacher Wars: The History of America's Most Embattled Profession
April 13, MOCA
Attendance: 10

This program was created by Jeanne Hoel, Associate Director of Education, School & Teacher Programs at MOCA to expand our field knowledge and professional circles by exploring an important text together. Because it's a sizeable and weighty text, Jeanne and MOCA Education staff sought to create a reading group structure

	that would make reading this a manageable task amidst busy professional schedules. Participants each read at least one chapter and MOCA provided a salient passage from each for reference during the discussion.
	MESC Annual Institute: Constructivist Cocktails **June 17, ESMoA** Program Fee: $12 (to offset cost of alcohol) Attendance: 38 The event was designed for informal educators to mingle, hear reflections from program chairs about MESC Pilot Programing, talk about issues in the field, take in ESMoA's current exhibition, and learn how to make their own cocktails using pedagogy that guides their teaching.

POST PROGRAM SURVEY DATA

Program attendees were asked to complete a short survey after each program. There were 56 responses to the survey. In addition to the questions below, the survey also asked participants to share any program specific feedback for program organizers. As predicted, the majority of the members attending programs are emerging to early mid-career.

Question	Response	%
1. How many years have you been working in the field of museum education?	0-5 years	48%
	6-10 years	34%
	10+ years	18%
2. Did the program enrich your personal professional development?	Yes	82%
	Maybe	9%
	No	9%
3. Was the content of the program applicable to your work?	Yes	84%
	Maybe	9%
	No	7%
4. Will you attend another MESC event?	Yes	80%
	Maybe	16%
	No	4%
5. After attending the program, do you feel like you are a part of the MESC community?	Yes	68%
	Maybe	20%
	No	12%

PROGRAM CHAIR REFLECTION

The program chairs were asked to reflect on their experience of planning and executing pilot programs in a variety of ways: a Google Form reflection, discussion at the final pilot program meeting, creating a Power Point Presentation that captured their program photos and lessons learned, and through sharing with fellow members at the Annual Institute. The following questions and answers were taken from the Google Form reflection.

What was successful in the pilot-programming model?
- Room for experimentation

- Professional development of the experience for program chairs
- The opportunity to collaborate with program chairs as they developed their ideas
- I enjoyed the support of the MESC team in advance with promoting the program across the organization, as well as day-of in implementation
- The idea was successful. We engaged the experiencer to experience. Through the individual our minivan family road trip encouraged a type of engagement unlike one on a typical field trip or meeting.
- Utilizing creative approaches to thinking about experience, perception, and engagement -- we were successful in uniting a group!
- Distributed program planning has been very successful. It was well organized; we were kept on task and provided with good tools.
- I was grateful to MESC for allowing non-members to attend since the campus students and faculty were a good part of the audience.
- I also worked on a program committee (in the old model) several years ago when I was on the board of MESC, and I found this process to be much more streamlined. I think the responsibilities were much clearer in this process, and it is easier to get things done when fewer people are involved. The MESC Board struck a good balance between providing us with support and guidance, and giving us enough freedom to plan and execute the program without interference.

What was challenging in the pilot-programming model?
- I did not have access to the spreadsheet and other documents created and used by the MESC board so had to go through my email to find and use the links.
- Size and scale. We were the right size for our event "prototype" -- so now on to scaling.
- It is always somewhat difficult to take on extra programming in addition to one's regular work.
- I think the biggest challenge remains that MESC is entirely volunteer-run. It can be challenging to plan a program as a volunteer while one simultaneously has many other responsibilities in one's job or jobs.
- There was a lot of responsibility for the planning, funding and implementation of the event placed on the planner. I ended up paying for the food and beverages for the mixer from my own pocket. I was fortunate to have support of my staff and docents to help with printing the program and manning info tables.
- It would be helpful to have guidelines for planning, funding, and public outreach in place. I spent a lot of time reaching out to colleagues on campus, in the K12 community, and the museum community.
- Reaching beyond personal networks. The networks of other program chairs could have been a greater resource for promoting each others' events.
- It is important for the MESC board and community to attend as many events as they can not only to show support and be available to talk to potential new members but also to be able to provide feedback. (Only one MESC board member attended my event)
- For MESC Members as participants (myself included), holding too many events seems like a barrier to entry, because it makes it easy to postpone attending. Holding limited events (as had been done in the past) makes them seem more desirable to attend.
- We feel that MESC members were overburdened with programming. In looking at the lineup, we feel that many of the programs could have been combined to create more dynamic sessions. One of the largest challenges was not knowing if people would be interested in the type of programming we created. It would have been nice to know first what people were interested in and THEN create programming, rather than creating programming and seeing if people went. Our initial plan was to identify issues, create an action plan, implement that

plan, and meet again to discuss the outcomes and provide one another with feedback. Because the turnout was so low, we were hesitant to meet again since we were using institutional resources, and had put so much of our own time and effort into this. The challenge we faced here was whether to give up on our original goal due to the low turnout, or to assume the risks by organizing another session. MESC members would love to see programs collaboratively created across institutions, but it didn't feel like that kind of work was really fostered, encouraged, or facilitated. Instead, it felt like everyone just came up with ideas on their own and submitted them and hoped that people came. It would have been interesting if MESC had taken the programs that were submitted, looked at where there were connections, and made suggestions about where institutions can link up and merge ideas.

CONCLUSION

The process of the pilot programming model was successful in engaging members in the transformation of MESC while allowing the board to work on strategic planning for the organization. An unexpected benefit of the pilot programming model was that the cohort of program chairs acted as an advisory committee to the board. The program chairs were empowered to create programs and communicate openly with the board about the strengths and weaknesses of the pilot programming process and the organization. For example, MESC has historically shared programs from other organizations or institutions through "MESC Recommends" member emails. The program chairs brought to the attention of the board that there was not a transparent structure to "MESC Recommends." As a result, "MESC Recommends" was identified as a possible member benefit and has since been systematized for members to submit programs or articles to be shares in member emails through the MESC website.

Historically, MESC board members were charged with producing the MESC programs. The challenges past board members have faced were similar to those faced by the pilot program chairs. It is difficult to manage the responsibilities of planning and executing a program for MESC in addition to the responsibilities of one's job(s) and personal life. It can also be challenging to promote one's own program to people outside of their network. Lastly, while the board did not plan or execute the programs themselves, facilitation of the programming did require board resources to ensure systems were in place and protocol was being followed.

Both the programming challenges that continue to be faced by program chairs and the space for organizational reflection the pilot programming model offered should be considered as MESC redesigns its organization structure. MESC should also consider its purpose in providing programming as well as its ability to cultivate community amongst museum educators in Los Angeles. Could the purpose of MESC programming to cultivate a community? Could a community be cultivated through a crowdsourcing program model? How might MESC members be encouraged and supported to collaborate with fellow members outside of their own network? Nonetheless, the pilot programming model affirmed that MESC is supported through the hard work and dedication of volunteer members committed to supporting the field of museum education and the audiences served by Los Angeles institutions.

ATTACHMENT A: MESC 2015 Annual Institute Program Survey Data

At the MESC 2015 Annual Institute, members were asked to share what content and format they would like to see in the next year of programming. 52 responses were collected and coded.

What topic(s)/question(s) do you want to explore with MESC?

Frequency	Topic
17	Best practices
12	Mentorship/career development
11	Collaboration
9	Docents/Volunteers
8	Teaching Strategies
8	Outreach
7	Advocacy
7	School partnerships/Common Core State Standards
6	Digital media
4	Audience
4	Interdisciplinary
4	Book club
4	Management/leadership
3	Special needs

How do you want to explore? In what format?

Frequency	Format
21	Shadow/behind-the-scenes
14	Digital forums
14	Roundtable/think tank
13	Seminars/workshop
11	Panels
8	Audience specific small groups
8	Play/art making
7	Share out
6	Happy hour/mixer
6	Teaching lab
5	Blog/publication
5	Toolkits
4	Book club
4	Conference
4	Retreat
3	Ongoing dialogue
2	Mentor
2	Research focus
1	Case study
1	Interdepartmental
1	Salon
1	Speaker from outside field
1	Speaker series
1	Speaking opportunities
1	Studio visit

ATTACHMENT B: Pilot Program Plan and Reflection Questions

The following text is taken from Google Forms that the pilot program chairs were asked to submit. The responses to these forms live in a Google Spreadsheet.

MESC 2016 Pilot Program Plan
All Program Plans must be submitted by December 15, 2015.

1. Committee Chair:
2. Committee Members:
3. Program Title:
4. Program Learning Outcomes:
   Write 2-4 learning outcomes/objectives/goals for participants
5. Program Description:
   Content will be used to advertise and promote program. 100 words max.
6. Program Agenda:
7. Confirmed Presenter(s):
8. Confirmed Date and Time(s):
9. Confirmed Location(s):
10. Program Needs:
    Financial or otherwise (may or may not be met)

MESC 2016 Pilot Program Reflection Form
All Program Reflections must be submitted by May 15, 2016.
Thank you for your contributions, MESC was alive this spring because of you!
This survey will be essential in evaluating the pilot programming model and is asking you to reflect on the content of your program as well as the logistics of the entire program model. Your reflection is greatly appreciated.

1. Committee Chair:
2. Committee Members:
3. Program Title:
4. Program Date:
5. Program Location:
6. # of people that attended:
   Please send any distributed materials and images of the event to mescbiz@gmail.com
7. What were the indicators that the program achieved the learning outcomes stated on the program plan?
8. In what ways did the program fail to achieve the learning outcomes?
9. What would you have done differently?
10. What was successful in the pilot programming model?
11. What was challenging in the pilot programming model?