

Guide Program Redesign Follow-up FAQs

We greatly value what we have accomplished together with our three programs and want to express that to all. Thank you for all you have contributed to the success of our programs. We move forward confident that we will maintain high standards of excellence with quality tour and gallery experiences in the unified Mia Guides program.

Questions related to tour audiences and topics

If I choose school tours, will I be able to tour adult groups (for special exhibitions, memory loss tours, corporate tours, etc.)? What happens if you have more people sign up for adult tours than there is need?

Please check “I am open to giving either adult or school tours” on the survey if you want to tour **both** school groups and adults. We’ll do our best to schedule you according to your choice and availability. Keep in mind that our need for adult tour guides changes constantly. Our primary audience has always been school-aged groups.

If we select the school tour category, can we request that we be assigned tours for a subset of the ages/grades?

No, there is not an option to request a subset of ages/grades. Our largest number of school tours are for PreK through 6th grade groups, so the majority of school tours will be for that range. However, the training sessions this fall will help prepare guides to tour all student age groups. Please be patient and open to new experiences as we build the unified program. Staff and other guides are here to support you in these new experiences!

Will we have the choice of adults or student groups every year? Or can I change my mind at some point?

We anticipate that some people will make changes in the future. We would ask you to let us know if you want to make a change.

Are we expecting that there will be Cross Currents opportunities both Saturdays and Sundays every weekend? Will Cross Currents replace Current Conversations (tour of the month)?

We will offer both Cross Currents and the tour of the month on weekends, but the number of times these tours will be offered each month has not yet been determined. We will also be developing new ways to engage multi-generational groups that incorporate activities and visitor choice.

Questions related to reasons for change/process going forward

Were the program councils consulted about this change?

We held discussions with each council before sending out our announcement and holding the general sessions so we could describe the changes and answer any questions they had. We will create a Transition Council from all three groups as we move forward. Collaboration with our guides is integral to the success of the new Mia Guides program. We see this as an opportunity to build this program together.

Is this change largely a financial decision?

Our changes reflect financial and staff cuts at Mia and also are about accessibility to our training programs and volunteer opportunities. Going forward, we are creating a more sustainable model that opens up our program to more people.

If there is such a need for guides for student groups, why not recruit new volunteers who agree/want to tour students instead of making current guides fill that need?

We first want to regroup and refresh our program after being away from in person tours for so long. Our intention is to eventually recruit more school tour guides. We will work with the volunteers we currently have and develop a new model for training that we will use going forward.

In the last fiscal year of in person touring how many tours were assigned to each of the two categories?

Looking at the numbers for one year does not adequately explain our decision; we have looked at data from many years. For example, some adult public tours include as many as 60 people, where every school tour is limited to 15. The need for school tour guides is greater at all times. There are so many factors that have led us to restructure our program. We addressed many of these in our letter and information sessions. As we discussed, equity and access to our training program for a more diverse range of people played a major role in our decision.

I love the art and truly want to awaken wonder through the power of art. I am concerned that we are getting caught up in so many other things that the art is getting lost.

We will always give tours that support our mission to inspire wonder through the power of art. We believe the issues related to diversity and inclusion that we are addressing have everything to do with the art. We want guides to feel comfortable having meaningful and sometimes difficult conversations about decisions museums have made over their long history that have not been inclusive or respectful of all people.

Are hierarchies changing throughout the museum or only for the guides?

Mia is looking at hierarchies that exist throughout the institution. Various initiatives are underway to diversify our Board of Directors, Leadership Team, the staff, and the types of exhibitions we offer.

Questions about training

Who is the fall training program for? When will it be held? Will training refreshers be available online?

Training will be required for all those participating in our new combined program. We will hold sessions in the fall, September to December. We anticipate weekly training with some sessions held for both groups together and some sessions held separately. There will be breaks for Thanksgiving and the December holidays. We will record trainings and offer some asynchronous sessions. We will also do in-gallery training.

Who will conduct the training sessions?

We will be working on the syllabus for the fall training over the summer and will look for the best resources/leaders for the various topics, drawing from both staff and other subject experts. We will also rely on guides' knowledge and experiences to help design and conduct the training.

Why didn't Mia offer a different time and day to do training to encourage a broader group of new guides?

We were successful in doing that for the CIF guide program by offering sessions at night and on weekends. We need a new model to ensure that opportunities to learn are accessible and available to a broader volunteer pool during weekdays when schools come for tours. Now, for all new guides, our training model will incorporate more choices for times and ways to attend training, rather than a weekday commitment that spans many months or years.

Will you have a process for equalizing the prior training that each program has had?

Modular training will help guides continue to learn and grow throughout their time at Mia. We will build on the strengths all our volunteers bring to this program and design ways to learn from one another. We have a wealth of resources that will ensure volunteers feel confident in giving the tours they are assigned.

Questions related to specialized tours

Will there be additional training for Discover Your Story tours and Veterans tours to increase the pool of volunteers? Will we bring Discover Your Story tours into memory loss facilities, to reach more people?

We will be exploring with our Multi-generational Learning staff the best way to continue and sustain these specialized programs. This could include the use of virtual tours to reach more people and provide more accessibility.

Will we offer youth book tours?

At this time we are pausing youth book tours. We will research ways to develop audiences for these tours before re-launching them. Perhaps we can offer a short list of book tours to school groups in the future when we have an adequate number of school tour guides.

What about Purcell-Cutts House tours?

The Purcell-Cutts House remains closed. On-site public or private tours led by volunteer guides are on hold until January 2022. Additionally, Mia is not offering volunteer-guided virtual tours or self-guided tours of the house.

Jennifer Komar Olivarez, curator of the house, wants to introduce a new tour in addition to the standard tours that we give. We will be offering training for this sometime in the future.

Do you anticipate that book tours will go back to every Tuesday morning and Thursday evening starting in January or will they remain the 3 days a month that we are doing now?

Starting in January, Mia will be open Wednesday through Sunday and Thursday evenings. We will look at adding more book tours to correspond with more open hours.

Based on this year's virtual tour experiences, what tech changes might you suggest for us? Mia needs a "Zoom Room" for guides giving virtual tours.

Later this summer, we will survey all virtual tour guides to understand more about the technology and systems needed to successfully give a virtual tour. We have thought about having a virtual tour station at the museum and are looking into it. This will open up virtual touring for those who may not have the adequate technology at home.

Will we continue to use VTS with kids and adults?

Yes, we continue to see VTS as a great asset for engaging visitors on tours. VTS can be used in both pure and hybrid forms.

Miscellaneous questions

Would wearing a mask be an option if mandates go away? Will preschool through 6th grade students, who are not vaccinated at this time, be wearing masks?

With the dropping of the Minneapolis mask mandate, we cannot require visitors to wear masks. We also cannot ask who has and has not been vaccinated. If you want to wear a mask while giving a tour, that is a personal health decision that we respect. Mia will continue to be vigilant in following all established governmental guidelines to maintain safety of volunteers, staff, and visitors while COVID-19 remains an active virus.

When will the Mia library be opened?

We do not know when the Mia library will reopen to the public. The library has a greatly reduced staff and is unable to provide service for the public or for volunteers at this time. We ask that you do not contact Janice Lurie directly with research requests. If you have any need for information, contact Kara or Debbi for assistance.

Will a third party with relevant expertise help with the “restructuring” and facilitate, in person or via Zoom, feedback sessions along the way?

We will work with Mia’s Manager of Audience Research and Evaluation, and perhaps bring in others, to help us gather feedback about the program as we proceed.

What does it mean to have flexibility in tour day choice? How will we know to block out a day for assignments?

You will still choose specific day(s)/time(s). With our new scheduling system, we are looking at whether someone can sign up for a block of time more than one day of the week.

How are docents and guides reacting to the change? Is Mia anticipating a lot of volunteer attrition with this volunteer program restructuring?

We’ve received a range of comments about the change. Most of it has been positive. So far, we have not had a great deal of attrition. We’ll know more when all the surveys are returned. We anticipate some people will make the decision to retire as we proceed, for a variety of reasons.