Six Qualities of a Relevant History Experience

DRAFT

Every Institution must remember: “Relevance is in the eye of the audience.” A relevant history experience is one in which the audience and institution connect through responsive, memorable, and applicable programs that are both timely and rooted in historical quality.

- **Connected**
  - Relates to individual and collective identities through universal themes
  - Shows continuity between past, present, and future
  - Builds empathy for those who lived in the past, transferable to others in the present
  - Engages emotion to strengthen connections
  - Evidence: Participant can identify how a program topic relates to something personal and meaningful
  - Quote: “I see how my experience in life relates to this topic.”

- **Responsive**
  - Stakeholders involved in development
  - Experience is nimble and flexible to audience in attendance
  - Evaluation and audience feedback are used in planning future experiences
  - Evidence: Participant has a way of sharing feedback and institution can point to changes based on input.
  - Quote: “I shared my opinions and the institution cares what I think and feel.”

- **Memorable**
  - Provokes new and profound pathways in the way the participant thinks about the topic
  - Uses unexpectedness and surprise to reinforce learning
  - Works to bust myths and familiar assumptions about the topic
  - Evidence: Participant recalls experiences related to program outcomes after time has passed.
  - Quote: “I thought about it in a way I hadn’t before.”

- **Applicable**
  - Can be applied in participants’ lives in some way
  - Makes visible the ways participants can use the experience afterwards
  - Evidence: Participant can identify how the topic will be useful in their lives; there is identifiable change in the community based on program outcomes.
  - Quote: “I will have an opportunity to use what I learned here today.”

- **Current and Timely**
  - Select history topics that relate to discussions happening in the community.
  - Provide historical background for current events.
  - Provide entry points to topics that are absent or marginalized in community dialogue; ones that are difficult for the audience to discuss.
  - Evidence: Participant can identify the way in which a current event or discussion is informed by knowledge of the past.
  - Quote: “I think the history of this topic helps me understand the world today.”

- **Rooted in Historical Quality**
  - Frames the topic with historical context and perspective
  - Uses primary sources that are authentic evidence of the past
  - Inclusive of diverse historical participants and perspectives, and absent narratives
  - Relies on scholarly expertise from institution, community, and published sources
  - Evidence: Institution has done research to inform the historical narrative and perspectives.
  - Quote: “I trust this institution has provided valid interpretations of this topic.”

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1 [https://go.sdsu.edu/education/projectcore/files/03252-6_Universal_Themes.pdf](https://go.sdsu.edu/education/projectcore/files/03252-6_Universal_Themes.pdf)

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