

The [Rubric](#) was drafted at the National Summit on Teaching Slavery held at Montpelier in 2018. It is the gold standard of best practices when working with descendant groups and provides the framework for Montpelier's short and long-term management.

The Rubric is comprised of three pillars: Multi-disciplinary Research, Relationship Building, and Interpretation. These pillars form the base of an evaluative process. They are the guiding factors when assessing if an institution is effective and ethical in addressing the role of slavery in American life and culture.

Pillar 1: Multidisciplinary Research

Multi-disciplinary research should be the foundation of any cultural institution; it should guide how the organization structures decision-making processes, pursues new relationships and inquiries, and crafts historical interpretation. Expanding research beyond historical documentation to include other forms of evidence including oral histories, the built environment, and material culture is critical in centering the lives and humanity of historically excluded communities. The five criteria: Rate your proposal based on the following five categories: Sources and Methodology, Accountability, Multivocality, Accessibility, and Collaboration.

Pillar 2: Relationship Building

When institutions fail to interpret the lives of the enslaved, they perpetuate historical and ongoing trauma to descendants, especially as institutions continue to profit from their ancestors' labor and pain. Including descendants in research and interpretation is contingent upon building and nurturing a positive relationship with the community.

Descendant communities and institutional partners should identify a set of desired goals and outcomes that the institution follows with strategic action. Achieving structural parity ensures that descendants are represented—and empowered—at every level of the organization, from the board to the volunteers. Institutionalizing these practices ensures continuity and longevity, while proactive evaluation supports quality control. The five criteria: High Standards, Expressed Commitment, Structural Parity, Institutionalization, and Proactive Evaluation.

Pillar 3: Interpretation

Interpretation is an important form of informal education at museums and historic sites. Cultural institutions have often failed to put the narrative of slavery at the center of American history, and have failed to provide representations of enslaved people as multi-dimensional, complex individuals with agency, and important identities beyond their labor.

Key to integrating this history is engagement with descendants of enslaved people. Institutions should work to engage descendant communities in the interpretation process. Descendants should be central to the planning, development, implementation, and evaluation of all forms of interpretation, from programs to exhibitions. Engagement should be early, often, and ongoing.

The six criteria: Multi-Dimensional Representations of People, Descendant Community Engagement and Collaboration, Institutional Commitment, Tools/interpretive Techniques, Inclusive and Equitable Narratives, Audience.