

0:00

OK, so welcome to our Museums for All Information webinar. My name is Helen Wechsler, and on behalf of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, I'm pleased to welcome you to this webinar about one of our national initiatives, Museums for All.

0:23

You'll hear from three people today.

0:24

In addition to myself, we will hear from Brendan Cartwright at the Association of Children's Museums, who co-ordinates and manages everything to do with the Museums for All program. And for a participating museum perspective, we'll also hear from Tatianna Herrera Schneider, Chief Engagement Officer at the San Antonio Museum of Art.

0:45

Thank you, guys very much for participating in this.

0:52

To set the stage for more detailed information that we'll be sharing about the program, I'd like to present just some general introductory information.

1:05

Museums for All is a co-operative venture between the Institute of Museum and Library Services and the Association of Children's Museums with the goal of expanding as access to the nation's museums by offering free or reduced admissions for EBT card holders, that's the electronic benefit transfer card that those receiving food assistance get their benefits.

1:31

EBT card holders use this card for access to museums.

1:36

And over the past 8.5 years of this initiative, which started in 2014, IMLS has been working closely with ACM to recruit museums into the program for participation.

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one of the strengths of this nationally branded program is name recognition.

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Member museums know that they are part of a larger nationwide effort.

2:01

Policymakers are becoming familiar with the program, and visitors who might not otherwise be able to visit, know that museums for all participation means that they will be welcomed.

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Another strength is that the access provided by the program is not limited to certain days or specific times.

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Museums for all participants are dedicated to providing access to everyone during their normal operating hours every day of the week.

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We began the program with the pilot for the Children's Museum community, but since then, participation has been open to all museums around the country.

2:39

We're happy by how much the program has grown and flourished. And there's always room to double, triple, quadruple the size of participation, and we hope you will help us do that.

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So, I'm going to hand it over now to Brendan, to present the initiative's guidelines, and.

2:57

Thank you, Helen. So the goal of Museums for All is to be easy for all museums to adopt and potentially to adapt as well.

3:08

We have a set of broad minimum guidelines that make it an easy to use program, ready out of the box.

3:16

And those guidelines include offering a general admission rate of no more than \$3 per person for up to four people when one individual displays a snap EBT card for many states.

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This is an easy way to identify a visitor who qualifies as having a financial need in a minimally intrusive way.

3:38

Museums have the freedom to decide what their admission price will be, free, \$1, \$2, et cetera, and are only obligated to offer that price for a basic general admission.

3:51

If there add on attractions at your exhibits or your museum's, you're not obligated to include them in your museums for all. offering.

4:01

The museums for all rate would be offered during normal operating hours, though.

4:08

As I mentioned, museums can adapt their offerings as well.

4:11

They can include WIC or Medicaid or other forms of identification that they accept for museums for all.

4:19

They can include discounts on special exhibits or events, and some museums choose to offer a discounted membership.

4:29

So we've seen some massive success for this program so far, and it's 8.5 years. Over 1100 museums have begun participating.

4:39

And this includes museums in all 50 states, as well as the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands.

4:45

We piloted the program in children's museums, but now every type of museum is represented, that history, museums, art museum, zoos, aquariums, multiple Presidential Libraries and so on.

5:02

Museums, in cities, in rural areas, large museums, and small.

5:09

This one's kind of a leftover slide when we didn't have 50 states, but here's a visual representation of the states where the museum's participating in museums are all very red.

5:22

And in case you're wondering how your particular region is doing, we've got it broken down here.

5:29

New England does look like it's lagging a little bit, but there are over 30 sites in New England that are counted under the single banner of historic New England, as well.

5:39

So that helps even it up a little bit. Many states are doing quite well. But California, New York, Florida, and Pennsylvania, have the most participants.

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And Ohio and Texas have been growing very rapidly recently as well.

5:58

As I mentioned, the museums for our program was piloted in children's museums.

6:04

And that's one reason that we see the large number of children's museums that participate.

6:10

But we've seen quite a lot of enthusiasm in history, museums, and art museums as well.

6:15

Some of these museums are free admission anyway, but choose to participate to really drive home their commitment to extending the invitation to every member of their communities.

6:29

And as you can see, we've had steady growth over time with our latest round of reporting where nearly seven million visitors that have used the Museums for All program to visit a museum.

6:42

The visitor numbers took a bit of a bump during the covid shutdowns and diminished capacities, but people still use this program.

6:51

As you can see, the numbers have rebounded quite well.

6:55

A similar program to museums for all is blue star Museums, which some of you may participate in.

7:01

And that is free admission to military members and their families during the summer months. There are around 2000 museums that participate in that program.

7:12

Museums for all, which runs year round and is aimed at helping families with financial needs, is that more than 50% of that total. So we're, we're excited. We're looking to catch bluestone museums though.

7:28

Phenomenon that we've begun tracking our hub cities, or cities that have three or more museums that participate in museums for all.

7:37

As you can see, many big cities that you might expect, like New York, Houston on the next, actually in New York on the next slide to New York, Houston and Chicago are on here.

7:51

But there are also places like Greenville, South Carolina, Missoula, Montana, and Springfield, Illinois, in a hub city, museums can work together to really strengthen, they're museums for all offerings.

8:05

They can also recruit other museums to join or at least demonstrate the benefits of joining.

8:11

We've seen that in places like Richmond, San Antonio, to live in Pueblo, Colorado, and Grand Rapids.

8:21

And we'll talk a little bit more about Hub cities later and also here some.

8:26

Some firsthand accounts.

8:32

Here, the rest of the hub cities. A lot of the cities that I mentioned are listed there, and this is a little out of date tier. I said that we now have 96 hub cities, but after I made this slide we're now up to 97. Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is not the first one there.

8:48

So, that's our 39th state with a hub city, plus Washington, DC.

8:53

That have, you know, though, that many states, with at least one hub city.

8:59

Like I said, it used to be one slide, but we had to split the cities up over two slides so that they'd be legible, They got very tiny legally style text.

9:10

So registering for museums for all is very easy.

9:14

We have a dedicated website at WWW dot museums for all dot org, with the number four, and there's a button to register there. The actual process should take less than five minutes, and it's free to do.

9:28

We provide support materials like access to branded collateral, Group site, Virtual Hangouts, Webinars like these, and more we'll also send you a window cling to use at your site.

9:44

There's a searchable map on the website, and all the participating museums are listed there.

9:54

Some of the other resources that we provide include previous webinars that have been archived infographics that you can use on social media, press release templates, examples of every state EBT card, and staff training recommendations.

10:13

We periodically create and add more resources. So don't be shy and telling us what you'd like to have.

10:21

Actually, ACM just hired a new Training and Resources Specialist, So we're really hoping to, know, get more and better resources for you all very soon.

10:33

Um, and we have created some resources, specifically for those hub cities that I mentioned, such as sample press releases and template agendas, and slide decks for holding meetings as a collective.

10:49

So now you've seen some of the background of Museums for All and gotten an idea of who's participating and what kind of support is offered. So now, Hellen will let you know about why participating in this program can be valuable to your museum.

11:11

Thank you, Brendan. So let's talk about the value of participating.

11:19

There are so many reasons to participate, but most importantly, it affirms that museums are meant for all members of community and that participating museums are committed to equitably expanding their community outreach.

11:34

What's great is that this effort typically fits easily within museums, mission, vision, and inclusion plans.

11:41

Also, Museums for all is yet another way to increase community access to your research collections, programs, and exhibits, and reduce all barriers.

11:52

Additionally, we make it easy for you to as possible to, to join by providing free, customizable collateral, as Brendan mentioned, such as press release templates and branding opportunities to make it even more successful.

12:07

Another benefit, we're beginning to understand is the power of participating participation among multiple museums in a single city and as Brendan said, we call these hubs. Forming these hubs that allows museums to market the program jointly and offer a menu of rich opportunities for families in their area.

12:27

Museums and hubs, which can be of course cities, but also more rural regions, counties, and things like that, are working together to build new partnerships with social service organizations and other community based organizations, and to have a louder and unified voice when approaching municipal leadership, or local funders for support.

12:52

So on this slide, you'll see a couple of comments from visitors to participating museums that show the value of the program.

13:00

The variety of individuals on food assistance is wide.

13:03

And while these quotes illustrate two examples, the nature of food insecurity in this country varies from one community to the next museums in this program serve people who may have experienced changes in their life.

13:20

Remember, the pandemic, either going on food assistance during hard times or coming off it when things get better, But be sure that all those served through museums for all, but remember that museums were there for them when they need it most.

13:37

So now way better than quotes, reading quotes, we have for you a real live museum for all participate participant. So now I'll turn it over to Tatianna Herrera Schneider of the San Antonio Museum of Art to talk about the museum's experience with the program.

13:56

Great. Thank you so much, Helen. I'm delighted to be speaking about why SAM is participating in Museums for All. A little bit about us as an institution.

14:07

Next slide.

14:11

We are hosting that original Lonestar Brewery on that famous San Antonio River walk in Texas. We are an encyclopedic museum. We actually opened in 1981 And annually, we're welcoming about 130,000 visitors give or take. About 60% of our visitors are local and about 40% of them fit within that tourism or tourist category.

14:40

So when we talk about why we participate museums for all, it's important to also look at the landscape in San Antonio. It's considered to be a city of working poor. It's the seventh largest city in the United States, but it also ranks number one at the top 25 most populated metropolitan areas of, you know, people living in poverty. It's also one of the most economically segregated cities in the United States.

15:07

About 130,000 households, currently, within Bear County, receive snap benefits, and over 85% of our students are economically disadvantaged. The flip side of that coin is our neighborhood, which is adjacent to downtown, is exploding. And it's getting actually a lot of national coverage with the amount of growth that it's experiencing. But with that being said, you know, neighborhoods adjacent to us and within our zip Codes are some of the most underserved communities and neighborhoods in our city.

15:41

Next slide.

15:42

So, why do we participate in museums for all? You know, with that being said, accessibility is a huge conversation, as I'm sure it is for many of you, and has been a conversation for many years.

15:54

You know, for us, it's really important to broaden our visitor base and reach those underserved communities. Specifically, museums, for all, you know, addresses, you know, the major barriers, stress, cost, and accessibility. And, you know, it's, it's other piece of our pie. Currently, we have three hours, two times a week, every Sunday, and to stay for bear county residents. And we're also free for those 12 and under always. And one of our big goals is to aim to serve multi-generational family units. So, this is of a piece of how we're addressing some of those costs and accessibility issues, because, you know, as Helen mentioned earlier, an individual can come anytime. It doesn't necessarily have to fit within our free hours. They can come when it suits them or when it fits within their schedule.

16:48

Specific to SAM, we adopted the program in January of 2020 and had grand plans for a press conference that march with our mayor and several other institutions. As Brandon mentioned, we are considered to be a hub city. And we have a \$3 ticket price. And for us, it does include special exhibitions. We do sell our tickets online and in person. And as of January of 2020, we've served almost 5000 individuals.

17:22

No.

17:22

When we talk about it, also, it's important to address this is of a piece of that pie that is helpful for, when you're applying for grants, or talking with funders about how you are reaching different communities, helpful to mention. But there's also the human component. You know, the quotes that were just shown. But for us, my visitor services manager just told me a couple of weeks ago, there was actually a family that came and celebrated. one of their family members can see Anita here at the museum, and use the snap benefits for admission. So, you know, there's that wonderful component of the human element, as well.

17:56

Next slide.

17:58

Just a couple of other small noise notes. I think it's really helpful to join forces with other institutions for greater impact and awareness. You know, when you come together, it really can amplify your message.

18:12

Then, I would also suggest if your City, or region has snap benefits available at public transportation, are best system via does offer snap discount. So, you know, continuing that conversation, transportation, obviously, is another one of those barriers, so if you can make that connection of how they can use the snap benefits, both to get to your destination, that's always helpful. For us, it's been really easy, you know, if it's been really simple, that reporting is, takes minimal amount of times, and there's lots of resources available to you when you launch your program. But, you know, certainly, if you have questions, or if you want to talk further, specifically, I'm always happy to put you in touch with our visitor services team, or answer any questions. As I know, the museums for All team is a great resource to ask questions as well, so with that being said, thank you all so much for your time.

19:11

OK, yeah, thank you, Tatianna, um, so follow that with the riveting topic of covered.

19:21

Know, as you all well know, museums were affected very greatly by covert 90, and then even now some museums are still operating at reduced capacity, or you have at least seen staffing reductions as part of it.

19:38

In something of a surprise, we still saw about eight museums a month continued to register for museums for all.

19:46

Even if they were closed at the time during the height of the pandemic.

19:51

We increased the number of participating museums during that man period of the pandemic by over 400, and it proves the continuing necessity of the program's mission.

20:03

So, you know, unfortunately, it has been the case that some of the museums that were participating in museums for all have had to close permanently.

20:11

But, you know, with one exception, every other museum has kept their commitment to offering museums for all rates to its visitors, and the one museum that stopped eventually started offering museums for all rates again.

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And, in fact, a couple of compensated for their reduced capacity is by offering their museums for all rates to every visitor.

20:35

But, yeah, the fact that during this time of extreme hardship, everybody chose to keep, it really speaks volumes, to me, Anyway, um, there were operational changes that were made during the pandemic and to ensure reduced capacity, as most museums required guests to buy their tickets online, or at least to pre-register.

21:02

And many have kept this system, or something like it in place. Tatyana mentioned that they sell their tickets both in person and online.

21:11

It's a bit of a challenge to museums for our visitors, who merely had to show their snap EBT cards at the admissions test before.

21:19

So you know, when you're building out these new admission systems, it's very important to keep in mind how your museum is still going to accommodate museums for all visitors.

21:31

Well, you have an option at that ticket price on the menu.

21:35

Will folks have to present their snap EBT card in person when they show up.

21:40

Will you just direct museums for all visitors to buy tickets in person?

21:45

Yeah, there's no right answer to this.

21:47

But whatever your museum chooses, it should be explicit and easy to follow on your website so folks know how to get their tickets.

21:57

And when you're allotting the tickets by time, make sure that they're enough for museums for all visitors.

22:04

So on average, about 3% of the museum's attendance is coming from museums, for all visitors, that does vary a little bit by type of museum.

22:13

It's a bit higher for children's museums, for instance, and, you know, lower for art museums. Sorry, Tatiana.

22:22

You guys are doing well anyway.

22:25

Um, one other thing that museums did during the pandemic while they were closed or unable to welcome as many guests as they'd like, was to really increase their community outreach.

22:37

And whether that's offering virtual museum tours and activities or distributing stem kits to schools, museums really embrace their roles as community pillars and made these active overtures towards their communities. And at its core, that's what Museums for All is all about.

22:57

It's extending that active invitation to everyone.

23:01

Making sure they know that the museum is for them and that it wants them there.

23:09

Museums recognize that access and inclusivity are important bedrock of organizational values and museums for all as one way to help with DEI efforts.

23:23

So an organization's commitment to inclusivity usually extends beyond just museums for all.

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And in fact, Museums for All works best when it's part of a suite of offerings.

23:35

Again, Tatianna mentioned that they have their free days for the county residents as well.

23:40

Um, and, you know, many museums offer some sort of, you know, monthly free day or at least reduced admission for seniors, children, and perhaps educators or military.

23:56

Um, some even have free memberships that can be checked out of the library by anyone with a library.

24:04

And all of those are wonderful and museums for all supplements them rather than taking the place of any of them.

24:12

And while the only requirement to participate in Museums for All is to accept snap EBT cards, I'd mentioned earlier that several of the participants do also accept WIC. Some accept Medicaid as well.

24:25

The Madison Children's Museum has 21 different identifications that they will accept for their \$1 admission fee.

24:33

You don't need to go that far, but, if you want to, you are empowered to do it.

24:41

About 10% of the participating museums also offer some sort of reduced membership program, as well.

24:48

So they're taking that next step and getting people in the door on daily admissions, and then turning them into members with more solid museum going habits.

24:59

Some of them are also using the opportunity to catch visitors', that museums for all might be letting fall through the cracks.

25:06

At the Omaha Children's Museum, for instance, they're expanding their reduced memberships to families qualified for reduced school lunch, rather than just the Free School Lunch Program.

25:20

And there are families that might just exceed the threshold of qualifying for food assistance, but still could find that visiting a museum could be cost prohibitive.

25:31

So these museums are stepping up and supplementing museums for all and other ways to try and catch as many of those families as possible.

25:40

Yeah, that's a nice thing about the program, is that it has kind of basic guidelines, and then allows you to build on it in ways that suit your institution and your So one part of joining Museums for all is broadening your visitor base. But another part is taking the time to work on assumptions and biases that exist within your own staff.

26:05

So one participating museum that was located in a college town was surprised to see how many grad students were using museums for all to visit.

26:15

They hadn't expected that many to be on food assistance.

26:19

There are some wonderful resources around diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion on the AAM website, and the Cultural Competence Learning Institute, CCI, is another fantastic way of museums looking to improve their own approaches to inclusivity.

26:37

one complaint that does come up is why people on snap assistance deserve this admission discount, or rather, why can't someone not on food assistance get the same rate.

26:49

So for our purposes, you know, a cutoff had to exist somewhere.

26:53

And we felt that a government issued card would work well, and be the least intrusive way to demonstrate the need for someone.

27:02

Uh, someone have the need for some help, in removing a financial barrier. But one of the reasons why we think that museums for all works best as part of a suite of options, so that those who don't have snap EBT is, no, some other kind of appropriate price can be found.

27:29

All right, flipping back to me, thanks Brendan.

27:33

So now we're going to talk about leveraging participation.

27:37

And, um, so sometimes museums, or their boards can be wary of joining museums for all. They see that it calls for deep admission, discounts in some cases, and worry that it will be to their budget. But we took a look at this and found that it is, in fact, not the case.

28:00

In 2018, we engaged a consultant to do an evaluation of Museums for All, and the experience that participating museums were having with the program.

28:10

The complete results of the evaluation are available on the website that you see on the screen, but here are some of our pertinent findings.

28:20

Most museums reported no change in ticket sales, but over a third of the respondents said that they saw an increase in ticket sales and attendance.

28:30

25% of museums saw increases in development, revenue, and membership and programs.

28:37

Only one of the museums that responded to viviana evaluation report a decline in their revenue since implementing the program.

28:45

Museums for All is a great opportunity to add new development streams, either soliciting funding that directly pays for the program, or finding grants and sponsorships that will help.

28:56

It's a great program that helps the entire community, and there are often foundations, banks, or other local funders that want to be a part of it.

29:10

As I mentioned before, we're connecting multiple museums, and Brendan talked about it too, in who are participating in one region or city. And we found that museums can do really great things when they collaborate in this way to promote the program in their community in December of 2018, which now seems like so long ago. We invited representatives from each of these hubs in San Diego, Chicago, Akron, Missoula, Chattanooga, Worcester, and Grand Rapids to attend to convening. So that we could determine how museums were working together to get the most out of museums for All Program.

29:53

We found that several opportunities for co-operation exist and not just between museums.

29:58

Hubs can using the Museums for All as an entry point to establish or deepen connections with local food banks or transit authorities.

30:08

Tatianna talked about that, in ways that can overcome other barriers, potential visitors face, in making it to the museum, like transportation.

30:17

These actions build trust between community organizations, museums included, as well as with their visitors.

30:25

It shows that the museums are serious about having everyone visit The complete report from the Hub. Convening is available on the Museum's website as well so you can take a look at that.

30:38

Last year, we repeated this effort and convened another group of hubs for Listening Session.

30:45

Cities like Richmond and Cincinnati, Provenance, Tulsa, San Antonio, and San Diego were involved.

30:52

We wanted to know what better ways we could support them Resources they needed.

30:59

So based on those sessions, we created some new resources, specifically for these groups of museums working together, including Special Press release template, a flyer for distributing around the community, a one pager to give to the local snap offices, sample meeting agendas for recruiting other museums or potential partners, and the slide deck for use in those meetings.

31:24

And these are all available for all museums and hub cities to use on our website.

31:36

So if this all sounds great, and fun, and intriguing, and perfect for you, just a reminder that it's super easy and free to register on the Museums for All website.

31:46

Just go to WWW dot museums letter number four, all dot org.

31:56

And if you have questions, your museums from family is eager to answer your questions, And here are our contacts, Brendan is that is the number one go to guy. I'm always happy to help if I can. And I'm sure Tatianna would be happy to talk about her experience, too, so, please feel free to reach out and also know that we have.

32:22

Let's see, then we also encourage you to, to share the news via Twitter. Our handle, and I looked at this Brendan, it's at museums, not the number for it, F O R, Arts, and that's confusing. The Twitter handle is available, but the URL wasn't.

32:45

Alright, so thank you guys very much for participating, Will stop now, and then move to questions.