

FY2025 Museums for All Webinar Recording Transcript

0:03

Hello and welcome to our Museums for All informational webinar.

0:08

My name is Helen Wechsler, and on behalf of the Institute of

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Museum and Library Services, I'm pleased to welcome you to this

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webinar about one of our national initiatives, the

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Museums for All program.

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There are three speakers during today's session.

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In addition to myself, we'll be hearing from Brendan Cartwright,

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who is the program manager at the Association of Children's

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Museums and the coordinator for this special initiative.

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And for a participating museum perspective, we will also hear

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from Ken Meifert, Vice President of Sponsorship and Development

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at the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum.

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To set the stage for more detailed information that we'll

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be sharing about the program, I'd first like to present some

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general introductory information.

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Museums for All is a cooperative venture with the Association of

1:03

Children's Museums with the goal of expanding access to the

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nation's museums by offering free or reduced admissions for

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EBT or electronic benefit transfer card holders.

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EBT cards hold food assistance benefits.

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Over the past 10 years of this initiative, which started in

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2014, IMLS has been working closely with ACM to recruit

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museums as program participants.

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One of the strengths of this nationally branded program is

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name recognition.

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Member museums know that they're part of a large nationwide

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effort.

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Policy makers are becoming familiar with the program and

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visitors who might not otherwise be able to visit know that

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Museums for All participation means they will be welcome.

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Another strength is that access provided by this program is not

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limited to certain days or specific times.

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Museums for All participants are dedicated to providing access to

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everyone during their normal working hours, every day of

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every week.

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We began the program with a pilot for the children's museum

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community, but since then, participation has been open to

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all museums around the country.

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We're thrilled with how much the program has grown and

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flourished.

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And there's always room for more museums to participate.

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So I'll hand it over now to Brendan to present the

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initiative's guidelines.

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All right.

2:34

Thank you, Helen.

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So the goal of Museums for All is to be easy for all museums to

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adopt and potentially to adapt.

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We have a set of broad minimum guidelines that make it an easy-

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-to-use program, sort of ready out-of-the-box.

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Those guidelines include offering a general admission

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rate of no more than \$3 per person for up to four people

3:00

when one individual displays a SNAP EBT card, and that can be

3:04

from any state.

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This is an easy way to identify a visitor who qualifies as

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having a financial need in a minimally intrusive way.

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Museums have the freedom to decide what their admission

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price will be free, \$1.00 per person, \$2.00 per person,

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etcetera.

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And they're only obligated to offer that price for a basic

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general admission.

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If there are add on attractions at your exhibits, you know,

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you're not obligated to include those in your Museums for All

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offering, although if you decide that you want to, again, that's

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where there's the potential to adapt it.

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You're welcome to if you'd like.

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The Museums for All rate would be offered during all normal

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operating hours.

3:52

You know, I mentioned about being able to adapt the

3:56

offerings for some museums.

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This includes accepting WIC or Medicaid or other forms of

4:02

identification that they'll accept for the Museums for All

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price.

4:08

It can include discounts on special exhibits or events.

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And some museums choose to offer a discounted membership.

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We've seen really massive success for this program so far.

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In the 10 years that it's been going, over 1,400 museums have

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begun participating.

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This includes museums in all 50 states, the District of

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Columbia, and the Virgin Islands.

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As Helen mentioned, we did pilot the program in children's

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museums, but now every type of museum is represented.

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We've got history museums, art museums, zoos, aquariums,

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multiple presidential libraries, and so on.

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And there's also another - Baseball Hall of Fame.

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The Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame participates in this as well.

5:00

Anyway, museums in cities, in rural areas, large museums,

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small ones, all types.

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This was a little more interesting back before all 50

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states had a participating museum, but it's a visual

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representation of states where museums are participating in

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Museums for All, everywhere.

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And in case you're wondering how your particular region is doing,

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New England looks like it's lagging a little bit.

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There are over 30 sites that are counted under the single

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banner of "Historic New England" though, for instance, so it it's

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not quite as large of a gap.

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Many states are doing very well.

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California, New York, Florida and Pennsylvania have the most

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participants, but Ohio, Texas and Virginia have been growing

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very rapidly as well.

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As I mentioned, the Museums for All program was piloted in

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children's museums.

6:00

Just one reason that we see a pretty large number of

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children's museums that participate, but we've seen

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quite a lot of enthusiasm in history museums and art museums

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as well.

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Some of these museums are free admission anyway, but they

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choose to participate to really drive home their commitment to

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extending the invitation to every member of their

6:22

communities.

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And it's also a good way to get recognized.

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If someone has gone to another participating museum and they

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see your free admission museum on MuseumsForAll.org, they might

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be likely to visit you as well.

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As you can see, there's been steady growth over time.

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With our latest round of reporting, we're at over 10

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million visitors that have used the Museums for All program to

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visit a museum.

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The visitor numbers took a little bit of a bump during the

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COVID shutdowns and the diminished capacities that

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museums were at, but people still use this program and as

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you can see, the numbers have rebounded quite well.

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A similar program to Museums for All, which some of you may

7:11

participate in is Blue Star Museums, which gives free

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admission to military members and their families during the

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summer and there are around 2,000 museums that participate

7:22

in that.

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Museums for All, which runs year-round and is aimed at helping

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families with financial need, is at about 70% of that total.

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So doing pretty well there.

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One phenomenon that we've begun tracking are Hubs or cities that

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have three or more museums that participate in Museums for All.

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As you can see, many big cities that you might expect like New

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York, Houston, and Chicago are on here, but they're also places

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like Greenville, South Carolina, Missoula, Montana, and

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Springfield, Illinois.

8:01

In a Hub, museums can work together to really strengthen

8:04

their Museums for All offerings.

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They can also recruit other museums to join or at least

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demonstrate the benefit of joining.

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We've seen that in places like Richmond and San Antonio, Pueblo

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and Grand Rapids.

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We'll talk a little bit more about Hubs later but for right

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now we have 118 Hubs.

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Although as Ken mentioned, we might put be missing Cooperstown

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on there.

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They do have three museums that participate, but I was being

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very technical and saying that two were sort of operated under

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one umbrella, so maybe it didn't count.

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And he said I think it should.

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But either way, at least 118 Hubs, 42 states, plus Washington

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DC,

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all have at least one Hub.

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And you know, this used to just be one slide, but we had to

9:00

split the cities up over two so they'd be legible to read.

9:05

So registering for Museums for All is very easy.

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We have a dedicated website which is www.Museums4All.org

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with the number four, and there's a button to register

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there.

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The actual process should probably take you less than 5

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minutes, and it's free to do.

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We provide support materials like access to branded

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collateral, a dedicated group site, virtual hangouts, webinars

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like these, and more.

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We'll also send you a window cling to use at your site, and

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there's a searchable map on the website as well, and all the

9:46

participating museums are listed there.

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Some of the other resources that we provide include previous

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webinars that have been archived, infographics that you

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can use on social media, press release templates, examples of

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every state EBT card, and staff training recommendations.

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We also have a profile dashboard of all the participating museums

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and you can use that to sort of compare and contrast and, and

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separate them out by various filters to see what you might

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expect from similar types of museums.

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As you decide to participate in Museums for All and we

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periodically create and add more resources.

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So don't be shy and telling us what you'd like to have.

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And we've, we've created some resources specifically for those

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Hubs that I mentioned as well, some different sample press

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releases, template agendas, and slide decks for holding meetings

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as a collective.

10:57

So now that you've gotten some of the background on Museums for

11:01

All and gotten an idea of who's participating, what kind of

11:05

support is offered, Helen will let you know about why

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participating in this program can be valuable to your museum.

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Thank you, Brendan.

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I'm going to talk to you a bit more about the value of

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participating in Museums for All.

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So now that we've told you all about the guidelines and who is

11:27

participating in the initiative, you're probably wondering, "Why

11:30
should I join?"

11:31
Maybe you already have access programs.

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Most importantly, participation affirms that museums are meant

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for all members of their community and that they are

11:41
committed to equitably expanding their community outreach.

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This effort typically fits easily within museums, missions,

11:49
visions, and inclusion plans.

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Also, the Museums for All is yet another way to increase

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community access to your research, your collections, your

11:58
programs, and exhibitions as it reduces all barriers.

12:02
We make it as easy as possible by providing free customizable

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collateral such as press releases, templates, and branded

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opportunities to make it even more successful.

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Another benefit is the power of participation among multiple

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museums in a single city or region.

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Forming these Hubs, as Brendan talked about, is allowing

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museums to market the program jointly and offer a menu of rich

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opportunities for families in their area.

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Museums in Hubs are working together to build new

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partnerships with social service organizations and other

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community-based organizations and to have a louder and unified

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voice when approaching municipal leadership or local funders for

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support.

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Here's a couple comments from visitors to participating

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museums that show the value of the program.

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The variety of individuals on food assistance is wide.

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While these quotes illustrate two examples, the nature of food

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insecurity varies from one community to the next.

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Museums in this program serve people who may have experienced

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a change in their life.

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Remember the pandemic? Either going on to food assistance in

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hard times or getting off of it due to better fortune.

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But be sure that all those served through Museums for All

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will remember that the museum was there for them when they

13:27

needed it most.

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But a better way than reading quotes,

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we have with us a real live museum participant.

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So now I will turn it over to Ken Meifert from the National

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Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum to talk about his experience

13:49

there.

13:50

I'm unmuted.

13:51

Thanks so much, Helen.

13:51

Appreciate that.

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Let's go to the next slide.

13:57

So for those of you who are not familiar with the National

14:00

Baseball Hall of Fame, we are located in Cooperstown, New

14:03

York, which is rural community in upstate New York.

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Our population in the village of Cooperstown is about 1,800 year-

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round residents and the museum welcomes about 250,000 visitors

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a year post-COVID.

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We opened in 1939.

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So this is celebrating our 85th anniversary this year.

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And the museum continues to thrive as the cultural and

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spiritual home of our national pastime and really evolving

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beyond our national pastime to really a global game at this

14:35

point.

14:35

So we're starting to see more international visitors as well.

14:39

Next slide.

14:41

So as museums, we're all focused on our mission.

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Our full mission statement is there on the slide, but we

14:48

really sum this up in six simple words.

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We preserve history, we honor excellence, and we connect

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generations.

14:56

Next slide.

14:59

This is one of my favorite quotes about the museum.

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And this is a quote from a guy named Dr. Gerald Early.

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He's a history professor at Washington University.

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And this quote was actually used in Ken Burns

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baseball series back in the 90s. Dr. Early was featured in eight

15:21

or nine of Ken Burns films, including "Jazz" and others.

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"There are three things that America will be known for 2,000

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years from now when they study this civilization: the

15:34

Constitution, jazz music, and baseball.

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They're the three most beautifully designed things this

15:39

culture's ever produced."

15:41

So just an amazing summation of why we still refer to baseball

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as our national pastime.

15:47

Next slide.

15:50

So what started in 1939 as a one room museum has grown into a

15:54

world class museum with more than 60,000 square feet of

15:57
exhibit space.

15:59
As I mentioned, about 250,000 people visit each year from

16:02
around the country and around the world.

16:06
And Cooperstown has become a national brand that represents

16:09
excellence.

16:09
I can't think of another example where the museum's name, right,

16:14
you can say, "He's going into the Hall of Fame" or "He's going to

16:18
Cooperstown so that the words are almost, you know,

16:22
synonymous.

16:24
Next slide.

16:28
So why did we decide to participate in Museums for All?

16:31
Accessibility.

16:33
And I think first and foremost, Cooperstown, for any of you who

16:36
have been here, is not an inexpensive place to get to.

16:40
We're about four and a half hours from New York City or four

16:42
and a half hours from Boston.

16:46

This is an expensive vacation destination.

16:49

Our normal admission is \$30 for adults and \$21 for juniors,

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which for us is age seven to 12.

16:56

Over age 12, you're, you're paying the adult rate.

17:00

So when we found out about the Museums for All program, we

17:04

jumped on this because we really felt like the chances of a

17:09

family, you know, two adults and say two kids, eight and 10,

17:13

you're talking about somewhere north of \$100 bucks for them to

17:17

get in the front door.

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And we really feel strongly about making this institution

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accessible to everyone and not just the folks who, you know,

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have the extra cash or disposable income to drop to get

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in.

17:29

So when we found out about the program, we reached out to two

17:34

other museums in town, the Farmers Museum and the Fenimore

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Art Museum, and all three of us signed up at the same time and

17:43
joined.

17:44
We joined in June 2022, and we offer 100% free admission

17:48
through the Museums for All program.

17:52
Next slide.

17:55
So I talked a little bit about adapting the program in June

17:59
2022, we offer free admission with a valid SNAP or SUN

18:04
Bucks EBT card, which the Museums for All program,

18:08
I think added that to their suggested cards to allow free

18:16
admission and we've welcomed 5,671 visitors,

18:22
this is as of September 30th of this year, since joining the

18:26
program.

18:27
And from a discount standpoint or revenue

18:30
standpoint, we really believe that these are 5,671 people who

18:34
would not have walked through our front door had it not been

18:38
for the Museums for All program.

18:41
So for us, it's a boost in attendance and we don't believe

18:45
that there's any loss in revenue by

18:48
participating in this program.

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We only believe that it's making the museum more accessible to

18:53
more people.

18:56
We'll also say that as we saw these numbers start to grow and

19:00
we do not have a sponsor to cover the cost of the Museums

19:04
for All program, but we designed another program to offer free

19:08
field trips to schools within our region.

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And I'm talking about cities like Syracuse and cities

19:15
like Utica who have very diverse populations and very high

19:19
childhood poverty rates.

19:22
And we were able to secure a sponsor for that program where

19:26
the sponsor is paying for transportation, literally buses,

19:31
buying these kids lunch while they're in town.

19:35
They're participating in our educational programs and, so far

19:39
this fall semester, we've welcomed more than 1,500

19:43

students and teachers to the museum who would have never

19:46

otherwise been able to get here.

19:49

So not only, you know, directly through the Museums for All

19:53

program, but inspiring our team to come up with new ways to

19:57

make the museum more accessible to audiences who

20:01

couldn't otherwise visit.

20:04

The program is prominently promoted on our Plan Your Visit

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page.

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And really, all folks need to do is show up with their SNAP card

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and their ID, and they're in the museum in a snap, and hopefully

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they're having a great time.

20:19

Next page.

20:22

Whoop.

20:23

I'm out of slides.

20:26

All right.

20:27

Yeah.

20:27
Thank you, Ken.

20:28
You bet.

20:30
And as I alluded to earlier, and as you all know, it's kind

20:36
of a bummer to talk about, but I am, museums have been

20:41
affected pretty greatly by COVID-19.

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You know, even now some museums are operating at either a

20:49
reduced capacity or maybe a changed operational system

20:52
because of it.

20:54
But in something of a surprise, we still saw about

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eight museums a month continue to register for Museums for All

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during the height of the pandemic, even if they were

21:07
closed at the at the time.

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We increased the number of participating museums during

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that main period

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by over 400 and it proves the continuing necessity of the

21:19
program's mission.

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You know, unfortunately, that it was the case that some of the

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museums that were participating in Museums for All had to close

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permanently.

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But you know, with one exception, every other museum

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kept their commitment to offering Museums for All rates

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to its visitors.

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And the one museum that stopped eventually started offering

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Museums for All rates again.

21:46

So that was a pretty powerful testimony to me that in the time

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that the admission revenue was really at a premium,

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nobody dropped this program.

22:02

And in fact, a couple compensated for their reduced

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capacities by offering their Museums for All rates to every

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visitor.

22:12

There were operational changes that were made during the

22:16

pandemic to ensure reduced capacities.

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Most museums required guests to buy their tickets online or at

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least to pre-register and a bunch of them have kept this

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system or something like it in place.

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It's a bit of a challenge to Museums for All visitors who

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merely had to show their SNAP EBT cards at the admissions desk

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before.

22:41

So when you're building out this new admissions

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system or if you're adding Museums for All to it, it's very

22:48

important to keep in mind how your museum is still going to

22:52

accommodate Museums for All visitors.

22:55

So are you going to have an option at that ticket price on

22:59

the menu?

23:00

Will folks have to present their SNAP EBT card in person when

23:04

they show up?

23:06

Will you just direct Museums for All visitors to buy their

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tickets in person?

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You know there's not a right answer to it, but whatever your

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museum chooses, it should be explicit and easy to follow on

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your website so folks know how to get their tickets.

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And when you're allotting the tickets by time, make

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sure that there are enough for Museums for All visitors.

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On average, about 3.5% of a museum's attendance is coming

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from Museums for All visitors.

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That does vary by type of museum.

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It can be higher for children's museums, a little bit lower for

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art museums, for instance.

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One other thing that museums did during the pandemic, while they

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were closed or unable to welcome as many guests as they'd like,

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was to really increase their community outreach.

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And whether that was offering virtual museum tours and

24:03

activities or distributing STEM kits to schools, the museums

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embraced their roles as community pillars, and they made

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active overtures towards their communities.

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And at its core, that's really what Museums for All is all

24:19
about, you know, extending that active invitation to everyone,

24:23
making sure they know that the museum is for them and that it

24:27
wants them there.

24:30
So museums recognize that access and inclusivity are important

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bedrock organizational values, and Museums for All is one way

24:41
to help with DEAI efforts.

24:44
So an organization's commitment to inclusivity usually extends

24:49
beyond just Museums for All.

24:52
And in fact, Museums for All works best when it's part of a

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suite of offerings.

24:57
Many museums offer reduced admission for seniors, for

25:01
children, perhaps educators or military.

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Many will offer some sort of monthly free day or even have

25:09
free memberships that can be checked out of the library.

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All of those are wonderful, and Museums for All supplements them

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rather than taking the place of any of them.

25:22

And while the only requirement to participate in Museums for

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All is to accept SNAP EBT cards, as I mentioned, several

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participants also accept WIC, possibly Medicaid.

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The Madison Children's Museum, for instance, has 21 different

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identifications that it will accept for their \$1 admission

25:41

fee.

25:43

About 10% of the participating

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museums also offer some sort of reduced membership program as

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well.

25:52

They're taking the next step of getting people in the door on

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daily admissions and then turning them into members with

25:58

more solid museum-going habits.

26:02

Some of them are also using the opportunity to catch visitors

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that Museums for All might be letting fall through the cracks

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a little bit, such as foster families.

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And these museums are stepping up and supplementing Museums for

26:16

All and other ways to try and catch as many of those families

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as possible.

26:22

One part of joining Museums for All, and Ken kind of mentioned

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this, is broadening your visitor base, but another part is taking

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the time to work on assumptions and biases that exist within

26:35

your own staff.

26:37

So one participating museum that was located in a college town

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was surprised to see how many grad students were using Museums

26:45

for All to visit.

26:46

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

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And there's some wonderful resources around Diversity,

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Equity, Accessibility and Inclusion on the AAM website.

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And the Cultural Competence Learning Institute, or CCLI, is

27:03

another fantastic resource for museums looking to improve their

27:08

own approaches to inclusivity.

27:12

One complaint that does come up is why people on SNAP assistance

27:17

deserve this admission discount.

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Or rather, why can't someone not on food assistance get the same

27:23

rate?

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You know, for our purposes a cut off had to exist

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somewhere.

27:29

And we felt that a government issued card would work well and

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the least intrusively to demonstrate the need for some

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help in removing a financial barrier.

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But one of the reasons why we think Museums for

27:44

All works best as part of a suite of options is so that

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those who don't have SNAP EBTs, some kind of appropriate price

27:52

can be found for them.

28:00

Helen, we'll turn things back over to you.

28:07

Thanks again, Brendan.

28:09

OK, so leveraging participation, sometimes museums or their

28:14

boards can be wary of joining Museums for All.

28:18

They see that it calls for very deep admission discounts in some

28:22

cases and worry that it will be a hit to their budget.

28:26

We took a look to see if this is really the case.

28:33

In 2018, we engaged Aurora Consulting to do an evaluation

28:36

of Museums for All and the experiences that participating

28:40

museums were having with the museum.

28:43

The complete results of the evaluation are available on the

28:46

website, but here are some pertinent findings.

28:51

Most museums reported no change, but over a third of the

28:55

respondents said they saw increases in ticket sales and

28:58

attendance.

29:00

25% of museums saw increases in development revenue and

29:03

membership and program sales.

29:06

Only one of the museums that responded to the survey reported

29:09
a decline in their revenue since implementing the program.

29:13
Museums for All is a great opportunity to add new

29:16
development streams, either soliciting funding that directly

29:20
pays for the program or finding grants and sponsorships that

29:23
will help.

29:25
It's a program that helps an often-underserved segment of the

29:28
community, and there are foundations or banks, or other

29:31
local funders that want to be part of it.

29:35
We're in the midst of wrapping up another evaluation because

29:38
2018 is longer ago than you think.

29:41
So we'll see how things may have changed.

29:45
The results of the evaluation will be available soon.

29:52
One of the other things that we do with participants in Museums

29:56
for All is that we connect them with other museums in their city

30:01
or area that are also participating in Museums for All

30:05
to form these Hubs.

30:06

And we don't call them Hub Cities anymore, even though it

30:09

says it on the slide, because we recognize that we other regions

30:13

or rural areas might have a group of museums that work

30:16

together. We found that museums can better promote this program

30:20

within their communities by working together.

30:23

In December 2018, we invited representatives from seven of

30:27

these Hubs, San Diego, Chicago, Akron, Missoula, Chattanooga,

30:31

Worcester, and Grand Rapids, to attend a convening so we could

30:35

determine how museums can work together to get the most out of

30:40

Museums for All.

30:43

We found that several opportunities for cooperation

30:46

exist, and not just between museums.

30:50

They can use Museums for All as an entry point to establish or

30:53

deepen connections with local food banks, or transit

30:56

authorities, in ways that help remove other barriers potential

31:00

visitors face in making it to the museum.

31:03

These actions build trust among community organizations and the

31:07

people they serve.

31:08

It shows that museums are serious about their commitment

31:12

to having everyone visit, that the invitation being extended is

31:15

real and genuine, and that museums are willing to put in

31:18

the work on their end to make it happen.

31:22

The complete report from the Hub City Convening is available on

31:26

the Museums for All website.

31:29

Then in 2022, we convened another group of Hubs, including

31:34

Richmond, Cincinnati, Providence, Tulsa, San Antonio,

31:38

and San Diego.

31:39

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

31:43

Based on these sessions, we created some new resources

31:46

specifically for Hubs, including a special press release

31:50

template, a flyer for distributing around the

31:53

community, a one-pager to give to local SNAP offices, simple

31:57
meeting agendas for recruiting other museums or potential

32:01
partners, and a slide deck for use in those meetings.

32:05
These are all available for all museums in Hub Cities and

32:11
regions to use.

32:17
So if all this sounds intriguing to you, it's very easy and free

32:23
to register for Museums for All at www.Museums4All.org.

32:33
We certainly hope the information shared today has

32:36
interested you in becoming part of the Museums for All

32:38
participation family.

32:40
We'd love to have you join.

32:42
If you have any questions after the webinar, please do not

32:45
hesitate to contact us.

32:47
Listed here are our email addresses for both Brendan, and

32:50
Ken, and myself, and we are more than happy to answer questions

32:53
you have about the program.

32:55
You can also contact the general mailbox at info@Museums4All.org.

33:03

That's with the number four.

33:06

And we encourage you all to connect with all of the latest

33:10

Museums for All news via Twitter @MuseumsForAll, F-O-R, just to

33:15

be a little confusing.

33:18

So now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague Elizabeth

33:25

because it's time for questions and answers.

33:30

Thanks for joining us today.

33:32

And we'll be posting, again.

33:33

We'll be posting the video recording along with slides and

33:37

a transcript on the IMLS website at imls.gov/webinars.

33:42

It should be available within a couple of days.

33:44

All right, Elizabeth, take it away.

33:47

Thank you, Helen.

33:48

Hi, I'm Elizabeth De Leon-Jones and I work with Helen at IMLS. I

33:54

am taking your questions today and I see we have one question

33:59

in already. "Hi," it says, "Can you explain any more about how

34:05
free museums can make the most of this initiative?"

34:12
Yeah, I can talk a little bit about that.

34:16
So, you know, it, it always kind of seems to me that free museums

34:21
should all really be participating in Museums for All

34:26
because it's kind of the easiest thing to do.

34:31
There are some that you're obviously not giving a

34:36
discount on the admission, but there are some who try

34:41
to find other types of ways.

34:44
They might give us a discount in the museum shop, for instance,

34:49
if there's a paid membership that they offer, they can do a

34:54
discounted membership there.

34:59
And it is also helpful, especially if you've got

35:03
other museums in your city or area, to be able to partner with

35:08
them on Museums for All.

35:11
I mentioned a little bit about how if someone goes

35:16
to another museum that participates in Museums for All

35:21

and they see, "Oh, this free museum is also in town and is

35:26

part of this.

35:27

I know that I had a great experience at this other museum

35:30

that was involved in Museums for All.

35:32

Let's go check this one out."

35:36

So it's some nice marketing on your behalf as well.

35:41

We do host hangouts, informal hangouts, usually on a monthly

35:47

basis, and we've discussed the role of free museums a couple of

35:54

times on those.

35:56

So we have the recordings from those hangout sessions as well

36:01

that I'd be happy to share with you to get some more ideas.

36:06

But that's kind of the gist of it.

36:09

The one tricky part for a free museum participating, comes when

36:16

it's time to share attendance reporting.

36:21

You know, we don't want to have you going out of your way to ask

36:26

your visitors if they're coming in with a SNAP EBT card or not.

36:32

So for the free museums, we generally just get your total

36:37

attendance and we get attendance reports on a

36:40

quarterly basis.

36:42

So for those three months, we just get your total attendance.

36:46

If you happen to have discovered in some way that someone is

36:50

coming specifically because of Museums for All, you're welcome

36:54

to report it that way.

36:56

But you know, otherwise we can just track your total attendance

37:00

over time.

37:02

It's a lot more important to us that the visitors are feeling

37:07

welcome and included and are able to come rather than getting

37:12

the most accurate count of who's coming and why to the museum.

37:19

So you know, that is kind of a little "nut" with free museums

37:24

that we haven't really cracked over the lifespan of this

37:28

program.

37:29

But you know, it's also of secondary importance in the

37:33
grand scheme of things.

37:35
Go ahead, Helen.

37:40
I was just going to add one other little thing, which is

37:44
that families may not know about your museum or know you're free.

37:48
And a great part of the program is that it interacts with social

37:52
service organizations and other community organizations who do

37:56
serve those families.

37:58
And often that's where they hear about the program and that's

38:01
where they hear there are amazing museum resources in

38:04
their communities that will welcome them.

38:06
So they're coming at you from a different way.

38:09
And that's another reason to be part of the effort.

38:16
Thank you, Brendan and Helen. We have another question here.

38:22
It says, "At PacSci [Pacific Science Center], we currently

38:25
have Access memberships instead of Access tickets.

38:29
Do you see benefits in getting museums to have both?"

38:35

Actually my supervisor is Keni Sturgeon, who used to work at

38:40

the Pacific Science Center, and she likes to tell the story of

38:45

how, at the time, they were weighing whether to get involved

38:49

in Museums for All or to offer an Access membership.

38:53

And you guys chose the Access membership.

38:56

But they kind of go hand in hand.

39:00

Museums for All, at its core, is set up to be there for a daily

39:09

admission to make that easy.

39:14

But a lot of museums, especially once they get started

39:18

participating in it, they decide that they want to add on a

39:23

membership component to it as well.

39:27

And that's beneficial in a lot of ways, primarily in that it

39:33

gets the visitor feeling a little bit more involved

39:40

in the museum. One other really nice benefit of that is they'll

39:46

get a membership card.

39:48

And so whatever kind of lingering stigma there might be

39:52

with showing a SNAP EBT card, you can eliminate that by, you

39:56

know, they get to show their museum membership card.

40:02

So yeah, they really go hand in hand.

40:04

I think the benefit of Museums for All is it

40:07

allows the visitors to dip their toe in the water first, you

40:13

know, they don't have to jump all in on a membership. And the

40:19

discounted memberships, we don't have specific guidance on what

40:26

those should cost.

40:29

But sort of organically, the museums have largely landed in a

40:35

\$20-30 range for an annual membership for a family of four

40:40

with their reduced price and that's a really good deal for a

40:46

membership.

40:49

It may be a little bit more, like \$30 might be more than a

40:54

family wants to spend on that day.

40:56

Maybe they just want to go visit the museum and if it's \$2 per

41:01

person, they just have to spend \$8 to go visit.

41:07

So that's some of the benefits of the strict baseline Museums

41:14

for All program versus a membership.

41:18

But they really go hand-in-hand honestly. There are a few

41:24

museums that have registered and they use a discounted membership

41:31

rate rather than a discounted daily admission as their way of

41:38

participating in Museums for All.

41:42

So that can work in certain cases.

41:46

But usually the ones that have a membership offering are doing

41:52

that in concert with the daily admission as well.

42:00

Thank you.

42:02

We have another question here:

42:05

"Other than reporting quarterly attendance figures, are there

42:09

any other reporting expectations?"

42:14

So those are the only expectations.

42:17

We do have optional spaces on the reporting form.

42:23

If you have gotten a sponsor, sort of like Ken mentioned, if

42:28

you have created any new partnerships with any other

42:33

organizations in your community through Museums for All, we like

42:39

to know about that.

42:41

And one of the best ones, is the testimonials or comments.

42:48

So any kind of feedback that you have for us that's not an

42:52

attendance number can go in that box.

42:55

That's usually where I get the really good stories of

42:59

people that come in.

43:01

One of my favorites was of a father who came and brought his

43:07

family to the museum and then realized that it was going to be

43:12

a little too expensive.

43:15

And they asked, "Do you have a SNAP EBT card?"

43:17

And he did, and he was able to bring the family into the museum

43:21

and enjoy it.

43:22

And it just really highlighted to me that the desire for people

43:27

to visit the museums is there to the point where they'll take the

43:33

risk of going to the museum without necessarily knowing that

43:39

they can afford to go in once they get there.

43:43

And if they're able to go that far, then I think it's a really

43:47

great thing for the museum to say, "OK, you've come this far,

43:52

we're going to go the rest of the way to meet you and make

43:55

sure that we can get you into our museum because you want to

43:59

be here and we want you to be here too."

44:02

So we're making that happen via Museums for All.

44:09

Thank you.

44:11

There's a couple of similar questions:

44:15

"How can my museum make the best use of the program if we are not

44:19

located in a Hub City?"

44:22

And then another question: "How do you recommend getting a Hub

44:26

started?"

44:33

Ken, maybe this might be good for you to talk about since you

44:38

were discussing with the Farmers Museum and the art museum

44:44
in town too.

44:46
Yeah for us, we found out about the program and decided to

44:49
enroll and really it was about picking up the phone and calling

44:54
our colleagues at the other museums and saying, "Hey, we, we

44:57
came across this great program.

45:01
Would you like to participate with us? And we can do a joint

45:04
announcement together."

45:06
And they took a few days to think about it and jumped right

45:12
on board.

45:13
So we started a Hub with one or two phone calls.

45:18
But again, I think for us and before we actually signed up, I

45:23
talked to a number of museums in upstate New York who were

45:28
participating ahead of us.

45:30
And everybody felt like these were new visitors that were

45:33
walking through the front door.

45:35
And as Helen mentioned, no impact on budget, there's no

45:38
lost revenue.

45:39
It's just more guests who otherwise wouldn't be coming

45:42
through the front door.

45:43
And I think when you approach it with that kind of attitude and

45:47
you can share that with other museums in your community, this

45:50
program becomes a real no-brainer, right?

45:53
And it becomes something that our staff and the rest of the

45:57
leadership team here is really proud of our participation.

46:01
And I think that's an important thing too.

46:03
It's a sense of pride that we're all doing this good work and to

46:07
make it accessible to people who otherwise couldn't walk through

46:11
the front door that makes you feel good every day.

46:14
So, I think there's a lot of benefits, you know, additional

46:18
visitors and that sense of pride in making the museum accessible.

46:23
I think it's an easy conversation to have with other

46:26
museums in your community, especially if you're on board.

46:30

We convinced them before we were even on board.

46:32

So, just sign up.

46:40

Yeah, sometimes it does take a champion on staff to get the

46:44

that decision pushed through for the higher-ups.

46:48

But at the end of the day, it's a very mission-driven program as

46:53

well.

46:53

It's about expanding your outreach as a museum and just

46:59

helping your community all that much more.

47:06

And I will say that the Museum for All site is great and being

47:10

able to search by community and type of museum, as both Helen

47:15

and Brendan mentioned. IMLS is pushing this out through social

47:19

service organizations and people are aware of this.

47:23

And they're looking for stuff to do in their community or in

47:27

their region.

47:28

So they may find you on the Museums for All website, and

47:33

come visit you whether you're a free museum or not.

47:37

They may not have known that.

47:38

So, great site.

47:49

"What information is required in order to register a museum to

47:54

participate?"

47:57

So the registration form is there on the website as well.

48:02

But it's really just some basic contact information.

48:09

We ask how this will fit into your overall outreach plan and

48:15

then choosing what level of admission you'd like to

48:22

charge and letting us know which date you'd like to go live with

48:29

it.

48:29

And that's when we'll put you on the website.

48:33

So there's really not very much information that we require from

48:39

you.

48:40

I guess it's also important to say that there's not any

48:45

kind of expectations really on our end either.

48:50

If you are not having anybody come through the door, even if

48:56
you're trying, you're making outreach and no one's coming,

49:01
that's OK.

49:02
You know, it's there.

49:04
And if you're making the invitation, the other person

49:08
does have to say yes.

49:10
So it's a two-way thing.

49:14
Even if you just have the Museums for All logo on your

49:18
website, but that's the extent of the outreach you do,

49:23
it's just there in case someone wanders in with the SNAP card.

49:26
Yep, that's OK, that's fine.

49:29
It's one of those "you get out of it what you put into it" kind

49:34
of things.

49:35
But you know, the important thing is that it's there. Also,

49:41
there's not a time commitment to any of this either.

49:45
So if you register, you're participating and then for

49:50
whatever reason, you're saying, "OK, I think we don't want to

49:55
do this anymore."

49:58
You can just let me know.

50:00
We'll probably ask you a couple questions like an

50:04
exit interview thing to find out what wasn't working and how we

50:08
can address that for other museums in the future.

50:11
But just let me know and we'll take you off the website and no

50:16
hard feelings or anything.

50:18
But also the vast majority of museums, once they get started,

50:26
they're like Ken basically, "This is great,

50:32
we like it."

50:34
If this program were to stop tomorrow, I think the vast

50:38
majority would still keep it in place and probably like it

50:42
better because they wouldn't have to give me their quarterly

50:47
reports.

50:47
But it is a very good mission driven, easy to use

50:53
program, and pretty easy to explain to visitors as well.

50:58

And you know the feedback that we get from museums is that

51:03

the visitors are so happy to have this to enable them to

51:08

come.

51:08

I think we have time for this last question.

51:23

We have a few minutes. And it says, "It was mentioned that

51:27

visitors can be charged full add-on prices for special

51:32

exhibitions or events.

51:34

Is there a recommended approach for determining prices for these

51:39

add-on exhibitions or events?"

51:46

I don't have a recommended approach to it.

51:49

It's a thing where this program has to make

51:53

sense for visitors, but it also has to make sense for the

51:58

museums that are participating.

52:01

So I guess I would just say that because it's an add-on, it's

52:07

going above the basic requirements that we have of

52:13

you.

52:15

It's not subject to the requirements.

52:19

So if you had a special exhibit that charged more, you wouldn't

52:26

necessarily have to cap that at \$3.

52:31

You could give it some kind of discount.

52:33

But it's not necessarily subject to the Museums for All basic

52:38

guidelines.

52:39

You can say, "We're charging you \$10 for this one that normally

52:46

costs \$20," as part of your Museums for All package.

52:53

They're not here, but I'm going to volunteer them anyways -

52:57

the Cincinnati Museum Center is one that went from just having

53:03

their basic admission covered by Museums for All.

53:08

And then they did add special exhibits under that umbrella as

53:14

well.

53:14

So I think checking in with them to see how they did things,

53:21

I would recommend that as well if you're interested in learning

53:25

a bit more about that.

53:40

I'm sorry, I realized I was muted.

53:43

I do not see any additional questions in the in the Q&A.

53:49

Well, then we will say thank you very much.

53:52

And we truly, truly hope that you will consider signing up for

53:56

Museums for All.

53:58

And of course, contact us if you have any other questions that

54:01

you think about later.

54:03

And shameless plug, remember that IMLS funding opportunity

54:06

deadline is coming up on November 15th.

54:09

So if you have good project ideas, write up a proposal and

54:13

send it our way.

54:16

Yeah, thanks everyone.

54:17

And thank you, Ken, for helping us out on this.

54:22

Thanks for inviting me.

54:24

Yeah, thank you, Ken.

54:26

54:28

54:28