Highlights from the Museums for All Evaluation Report

an initiative of the
Institute of Museum and Library Services
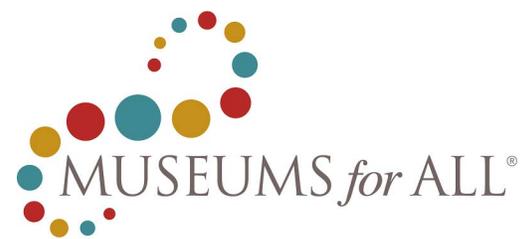
Museums for All is a cooperative initiative between the Association of Children's Museums (ACM) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to offer a signature access program that encourages families of all backgrounds to visit museums regularly and build lifelong museum habits. Museums for All is a way to broaden a museum's visitor base and reach out to underserved communities. Three years after the launch of the initiative, ACM and IMLS engaged Aurora Consulting to assess how participation in Museums for All influenced museums' access programs, internal processes, partnerships, and visitors.

The study used a survey (n=91) and an interview process (n=15) to answer the following questions:

1. How have participating institutions implemented the Museums for All program within their organizations and with respect to their own community's contexts?
2. In what ways has participation and implementation of the Museums for All programming supported or catalyzed change in participating institutions?
3. How do institutions envision their future Museums for All programming?

The museums that participated in the evaluation represented the diversity of organizations and programs participating in Museums for All, including museum type, geographic location, program model structures, and length of time as a Museums for All participant.

EVALUATION HIGHLIGHTS

Preparing for Museums for All

Museums join Museums for All as a way to help them provide better access to community members (45 percent) or because the initiative fits the museum's mission, vision, or bigger diversity, equity, access, and inclusion plans (27 percent). Museums have different structures, strategic plans, and community needs to consider as they implement Museums for All. The process of launching an access program, recognizing and respecting the needs of community members new to attending the museum, and publicly announcing the museum's commitment to access and equity can bring up unexpected issues or previously unidentified barriers to advancing the program.

What issues arose as you adopted Museums for All?

n=89
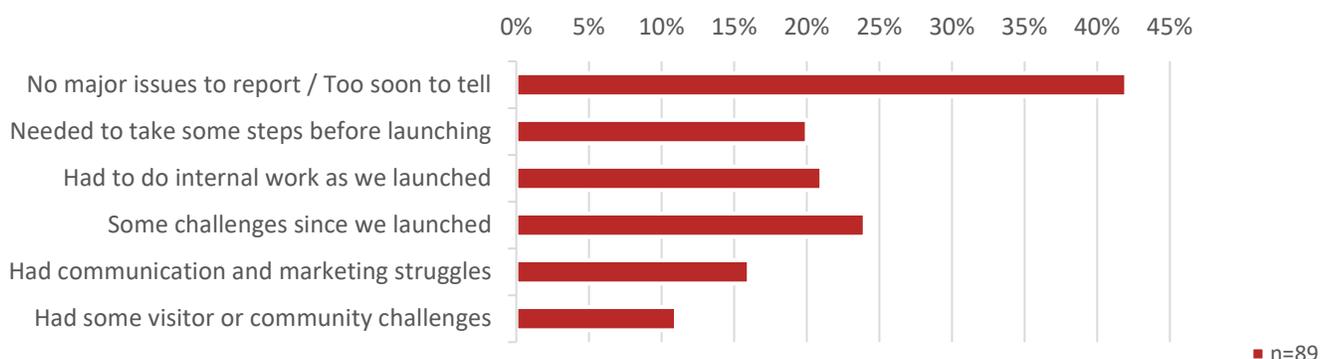
Promoting Museums for All

Museums carefully considered how to inform their community about their participation in Museums for All. Museums used their typical communication channels (blanket broadcast: 100 percent; direct to

connected consumers: 80 percent) as well as leveraged new approaches to spread the word. Museums reported using community outreach and community-wide messaging (59 percent), partner channels (39 percent) and direct communication to potential visitors (4 percent) as other approaches to increase awareness about their participation in Museums for All.

Museums reported varying uses of community partnerships as they implemented Museums for All:
- No changes in or uses of partnerships (39 percent)
- Partnerships support Museums for All (28 percent)
- Museums for All has expanded or deepened our partnerships (17 percent)
- Initiated new partnerships and conversations (11 percent)
- We are seeking partnerships (8 percent)

Outcomes of Participating in Museums for All
Participation in Museums for All led to museums reporting shifts in their visitors (40 percent), shifts in community connection and recognition (20 percent), and internal shifts and growth at the museum (20 percent). The people visiting the museum changed for some museums, with 38 percent reporting, "Visitors are different from those we traditionally see." While 20 percent reported that people are "attending and using the museum," 32 percent saw no shift, "as we have had limited use," and 16 percent were unsure of Museums for All's effect. Financially, Museums for All either did not affect or improved most museums' revenue streams.

	Ticket sales or attendance (n=90)	Development revenue (n=89)	Participation: membership, program sales, etc. (n=86)
Dramatic decreases	0	0	0
Slight decreases	3 percent	2 percent	1 percent
No change	52 percent	73 percent	74 percent
Slight increases	30 percent	24 percent	19 percent
Dramatic increases	4 percent	1 percent	6 percent

SYNTHESIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
Museums for All is one approach to advance diversity, equity, access, and inclusion efforts. The initiative is a concrete step to advance a museum's access for and support of their community. The initiative helps translate the ideals behind a museum's mission into tangible and effective practices.

- *Marketing and developing community partnerships are critical for a successful program.* To reach new audiences, museums must spread the word beyond those already connected to the museum. Museums that have not marketed beyond pre-existing communication channels have not seen many Museums for All visitors. Their communication streams are either internal-facing or only reach previously connected individuals.

- *Partnerships extend and expand a museum's connections and networks into their communities.* Partnerships and collaborations helped many museums amplify their communication, marketing, and outreach efforts about their access program.

- *The Museums for All community helps advance the field.* As the museum field grapples with issues related to diversity, equity, access, and inclusion, the Museums for All initiative and community could be a safe place to advance those efforts. Additional engagement, connection, and presence about Museums for All could help support museum professionals and the field.

These Highlights were adapted from the Museums for All Evaluation Report published in November 2018. For the full report, visit www.imls.gov/publications/museums-all-evaluation. Questions? Contact Info@Museums4All.org.