

**CALL FOR PROPOSALS**

**VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2020*: CO-CREATING THE FUTURE: Participation and the role of VISITOR STUDIES***

**5th and 6th March 2020, MUSEUM OF LONDON**

**DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: Friday 18th October 2019**

The Visitor Studies Group is a membership organisation for individuals whose role involves, uses or benefits from visitor studies. We aim to champion visitor studies as a force for evidence-based decision-making to encourage and create excellent experiences for all audiences.

Our conference is a place where delegates from across the cultural sector – and beyond – can come together for two days to connect, share and reflect on experiences, research and learning.

As a speaker, the conference is a great platform to share your work with professionals in the museum, gallery, arts, heritage and cultural sector. It can raise you and/or your organisation’s profile and help make connections with others working in the field.

**ABOUT THE CONFERENCE**

The topic of our 2020 conference is ***Co-Creating the Future: Participation and the Role of Visitor Studies***

Over two days, we will explore, interrogate and understand how emerging research and evaluation around participatory practice and projects, collaboration and co-designing can help evidence the challenges and benefits of these models of working. Sessions will consider how research can help us advocate for and inform developments in these practices.

We are interested in hearing how research and evaluation can help us understand, and reflect on, the impact of participatory practice on participants, staff, visitors and institutions.

Some of the topics we hope to explore are addressed in the bullet points below. This list is by no means exhaustive, nor is it meant to be too prescriptive; we are open to your own intepretation of the conference theme.

* How can visitor studies be used to advocate for models of participatory practice, collaboration and co-design in museums? How has research been applied to challenge institutional power structures and build capacity?
* How can we use evidence to inform new and existing participatory practice within organisations, as well as evidence the success of tried and tested methods of engaging with audiences across the spectrum?
* How do we modify our existing research methods to evidence the impact and experience of participatory working on the participants themselves? How, if at all, can they be involved meaningfully in the research process? What are the benefits and challenges of doing this?
* What is the role of researchers and evaluators in teaching and up-skilling our colleagues in other departments who are leading on, or trying to embed, participatory practice in their work?
* What are the new and innovative research methods being implemented to evidence the impact of participatory models of working, including collaboration and co-designing, on the visitor experience? How might methods of research and evaluation have to adapt?
* What can we learn from other sectors who embrace elements of collaboration, co-design and co-production? How have these other models of working been utilised successfully to enhance the audience experience in the cultural sector?

We encourage you to bring fresh perspectives from both inside and outside the sector – that have evaluation at their core – that can help us begin to make sense of, and respond to, the use of participatory practice.

We welcome input from all those who can address the theme in a creative – and in the spirit of the conference– collaborative and meaningful way to share their own experiences of researching and evaluating participatory design in the cultural sector.

**SESSION TYPES**

We welcome submissions from those who can share success stories with our delegates and submissions which provide honest accounts of where an approach may not have gone as well as expected.

We are looking for contributions in a range of formats which can include, but are not limited to:

* discussion sessions/ provocations
* hands-on skills-based workshops/ training (should last approx. 45mins-60mins and proposed activites/ tasks must be detailed in your proposal)
* panel/ roundtable discussions
* case studies
* remote presentations (e.g. via Skype or recorded video)

Opportunities to share and to engage fully with speakers and delegates is actively encouraged to support and facilitate meaningful knowledge exchange. Please let us know what format best fits with your proposal; we also welcome alternative methods and formats for sessions.

On reviewing all submissions the VSG Committee may ask speakers whose sessions have a similar approach/theme to collaborate, something which has worked successfully in previous years.

*Please note that VSG is a not-for-profit member organisation and cannot offer speakers attendance at the event free-of-charge****.*** The costs of running the conference are paid for by membership fees and conference ticket purchase.  Tickets and fees cover the cost of venue hire, audio-visual support, catering, conference administration and event insurance.  We try to keep the costs of tickets down so that as many people can attend the conference as possible.

We do recognise, however, that cost can be a barrier to attendance. We are committed to diversity, equality and inclusion at our conference and wish to promote a more inclusive sector. For this reason, we offer a bursary for the conference and £100 towards travel and accommodation expenses (for more information see <http://visitors.org.uk/bursary/>). These are designed to encourage those who may not feel able to attend to come along to the conference. They are open to speakers as well as delegates. Please indicate on your proposal application if you would like to apply for one of these bursaries.

Beyond these options, we are also happy to discuss individual cases in more detail.  We are keen to welcome voices from outside the sector and encourage multiple voices, so please do highlight any specific requests you may have on your proposal and we will look at what funds we have available to support you.

Please complete the attached form and email to: admin@visitors.org.uk

**Deadline for proposal submission is Friday 18th October 2019**.

**PROPOSAL**

**VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2020**

All submissions will be judged by the VSG Committee and you may be contacted to discuss your proposal in further detail and shape it to fit into the overall conference programme.

Conference presentations and workshop papers will be published on the VSG website after the conference. Please bear in mind that anything you present at the conference will be in the public domain, so ensure you have the right permissions in place to present your paper.

If your presentation is accepted, we will contact you by Friday 15th November 2019 to let you know. As a speaker, you will be entitled to a 40% early bird discounted rate until the end of January 2020 (thereafter 30% discount) to attend the conference and networking opportunities. We are still finalising 2020 ticket prices, but as a guide, the cost of a VSG member speaker ticket at the 2019 conference with the early bird 40% discount was £87 (£117.00 non-member) for one day and £135 (£168.00 non-member) for two days).

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| **Name:****Organisation:****Contact email/ telephone:** |
| I do not require funding assistance to attend the conference |  |
| I would like to apply for the Conference Bursary, which will cover the cost of a conference ticket only for two days. If this applies, please tell us why in your email accompanying this proposal.  |  |
| I would like to talk to the VSG Committee about alternative funding. If this applies, please tell us a little more in your email accompanying this proposal.  |  |

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| **Please indicate in which format you would wish to participate:** |
| Discussion session/ provocation |  |
| Practical workshop |  |
| Skills based workshop/ training  |  |
| Panel/ roundtable discussion  |  |
| Case study |  |
| Remote presentation (e.g. via Skype or recorded video) |  |
| **Please indicate any specific technical requirements you have:** |

**Please provide a short bio (50-100 words) of the proposed speaker(s)/ panellist(s):**

**Using the following bullet points, tell us your proposal. Note that your response should be no longer than 300 words and should cover all of the points listed below:**

**•** A short abstract of your proposal, clearly indicating how it will reflect our conference theme.

• The key learning points delegates will take away – these too should align with the conference theme.

• How you propose to deliver your paper.