CALL FOR PROPOSALS

VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2024
The cost of culture: Measuring barriers affecting the visitor experience
10 MAY 2024
ISH VENUES, LONDON

DEADLINE FOR PROPOSALS: EOD 5th January 2024

The Visitor Studies Group is a membership organisation for individuals whose role involves, uses or benefits from visitor studies/ research. 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 to connect, share and reflect on experiences, research and learning.

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

ABOUT THE CONFERENCE

The topic of our 2024 conference is *The cost of culture: measuring barriers affecting the visitor experience*

Britain is in the middle of a cost of living crisis and audiences are also feeling the pinch. The Cultural Participation Monitor found that three-quarters of audiences are decreasing their spend on entertainment activities as a result and almost half of people say that they are worse off now than they were pre-pandemic. Financial restrictions to participation and enjoyment of arts venues, science centres, heritage and other visitor attractions are nothing new; however, with increasing suggestions and new requirements that organisations collect data on the socio-economic status of their visitors, the question has been brought to the forefront, and not without its controversies.

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 interpretation of the conference theme.

- Which audiences are most hit by the cost of living crisis and how should venues and programming respond?
- How do we ensure we treat the subject of struggling finances sensitively?
- How can we measure socio-economic class well?
- What are we actually doing with the data we collect? Are we just asking to ask or are we making changes to programming and pricing to factor in audiences' situations?
- How are we benchmarking against national data?
- How well do we already understand our audiences' class and financial situations?
- What are the challenges with this research?
- Have we seen our venues contribute towards social mobility in the UK? Can that continue in the face of financial pressures?
- What role does class in the research and wider cultural workforce play?

We encourage you to bring fresh perspectives, with research and evaluation at their core, from both inside and outside the sector that can help us move visitor studies forward in interesting and innovative ways.

We welcome input from all those who can address the theme in a creative, collaborative and/or meaningful way to share their own experiences of using a variety of approaches and methodologies in research and evaluation both now and in the future.

SESSION TYPES

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. 45-60 mins and proposed activities/ tasks must be detailed in your proposal)
- panel/ roundtable discussions
- case studies
- pre-recorded lightning talk (10 minutes)
- pre-recorded presentation/session

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.

DETAILS FOR SPEAKERS

Speaker tickets - The estimated ticket cost for speakers at this year's conference is £77.50 - £100*. Please note that VSG is a not-for-profit member organisation and unfortunately 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.

Bursaries - We do recognise, 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 bursaries for the conference ticket and/or travel which are designed to remove financial barriers and address representation. Please indicate on your proposal application if you would like to apply for one of these bursaries. We unfortunately cannot support with accommodation costs.

Speaker support – Each of our selected speakers is paired with a 'buddy' from our Committee to support and guide them from selection through to the conference. If there are particular needs you would like us to know about or requests for support at this stage, please do highlight these in your proposal.

Access – ISH Venues is located in London. The nearest step-free tube station is Euston. ISH is equipped with lifts and we always ensure sound levels and quality are meeting the needs of attendees. Please highlight access requirements in your proposal if you wish to do so at this stage. To increase access for our delegates, we will kindly request slide decks with notes from our speakers to provide to delegates.

Speaker set up – Speakers are equipped with lecterns and either stationary or hand-held microphones as standard. Additional set up and layout requirements may be accommodated and can be discussed with your Committee buddy.

Please complete the attached form and email to: the.visitor.studies.group@gmail.com

Deadline for proposal submission is EOD 5ᵗʰ January 2024.

PROPOSAL

VISITOR STUDIES GROUP CONFERENCE 2024

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 shared with delegates. Please bear in mind that anything you present at the conference will be in the public domain, so please ensure you have the right permissions in place to present your paper. We are also happy for individuals, groups or organisations to be anonymised, either in the conference itself or in any materials to be uploaded.

If your presentation is accepted, we will contact you by the end of January 2024 to let you know. As a speaker, you will be entitled to a special early bird discounted rate until April 2024 (thereafter a speakers' rate) to attend the conference and networking opportunities.

Name:	
Organisation:	
Contact email/ telephone:	
I would like to talk to the VSG Committee about a Conference Ticket Bursary. If this applies, please tell us a little more in your email accompanying this proposal.	
I would like to apply for a Travel Bursary. If this applies, please tell us why in your email accompanying this proposal.	

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, including brief 'lightning talk' (e.g. via Zoom or recorded video)	
Other (please specify):	
Please indicate any specific technical requirements you have:	

Please provide a short bio (50-100 words) of the proposed speaker(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 title for your proposed talk (*this can be tentative if needed*)
- 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.