

Partnering with Cultural Institutions: How-To Guide

Step One: Identify cultural institutions

Consider:

- Organizations that would be of interest to the primary demographic groups that your library serves. Organizations that would benefit from the exposure a library partnership would provide.
- Organizations that you have worked with in the past. For example: perhaps a local museum donated passes for summer reading prizes or provided library programming.

Do your research. Is a nearby city/county already offering cultural passes? Contact them for data about the success of their program.

Step Two: Make the Ask

Contact the cultural institution by phone and speak with someone in the membership department.

Share the following information

- We are interested in partnering with your institution to provide museum/zoo passes to our customers for check out, similar to the way they would check out a book or eBook.
- We are interested in providing this service to our customers to encourage them to discover one-of-a-kind cultural venues in their own backyard.
- Currently we have [number of card holders] who would have the opportunity to participate in this program. This is an easy way to increase exposure for your institution.
- We can help them expand access to local culture, increase opportunity for education, and turn library cardholders into museum goers.
- We have easy to use software, ePASS, that will manage how and what passes are checked out. The software is highly customizable and can be managed by the venue. The software also allows organizations to target specific populations and track pass usage.
- Cultural pass programs are currently in place across the country from Seattle and Boston to Denver and Miami and are extremely successful for cultural institutions and libraries. [Include local information if available]
- Note that funding is often available to support collaboration between libraries and cultural institutions, for example, [Sparks! Ignition Grants from IMLS](#)

Step Three: Initial Follow Up

Via email (sample below)

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss our library museum partnership [or insert the name of your program]. I am excited about the opportunity for [name of library] to partner with [name of cultural institution] to provide access to the fabulous exhibits and educational opportunities that your institution has available.

Together we can expand access to local culture, increase opportunity for education, and turn library cardholders into museum goers. Here are the details...

[Library name or program name] will make cultural passes available through an easy-to-use online library of passes that can be reserved by library cardholders. Library customers simply browse the venues they want to visit, select the dates, reserve passes, and, optionally, print them! (Passes can also be loaded on to a smart phone, for mobile access.) The passes are secure, and include the library cardholder's name and the date given pass will be valid. Your staff simply verifies the library cardholder's ID. In addition, the number of passes to your institution can be limited, based upon a number that you determine. Interested in seeing how this works? Visit <http://epassdemo.quipugroup.com/> to observe the customer experience.

[cultural institution] has a fantastic opportunity to increase your visibility throughout our community. In order to benefit our partners, we are able to track where our library patrons come from. We could provide you with detailed information that indicates where you have developed new library audiences and help you target specific populations/demographics.

Libraries and cultural institutions share many of the same goals—exploration, discovery, and lifelong learning. Your participation in this program demonstrates that together we can support learners of all ages and encourage our public to be curious and engaged with culture.

We hope that you will help us expand access to educational and cultural resources, and turn library cardholders into users of cultural institutions! Please let us know what we can do to help make a partnership possible.

Step Four: Follow Up/Secure Partnership

Within a week or 10 days follow up again via phone.

Ask the following

- Did they utilize the demo site? Do they have questions about the customer experience?
- Are they interested in growing awareness and usage of their institution?
- Have they considered how many passes they could allocate for this program?

- Be prepared to remind them that participation will drive traffic to their institution at a minimal cost
- Expose non-users (of their institution) to the exciting exhibits and resources that they offer
- Demonstrate to the community that they are dedicated to exploration, discovery and lifelong learning
- Align them with an organization [your library] that is loved by [number of cardholders] customers.

Also be prepared to share with them

- Other institutions you are/have partnered with and their commitment [if known]

Step Five: Finalize commitment

Outline via email or a formal document (see Contra Costa for an example) or include the following:

- Contact Information: (point person, address, phone, email)
- Institution description: brief description of venue
- Allowed uses: how many passes per month for the library, number of usages per customer (if applicable)
- Restrictions: (if applicable) e.g. limited to users within a specific zip code
- Allowances: Number of adults admitted, number of children admitted (define ages for children)
- Dates: all dates institution is open, or not including spring break, etc.
- Length of commitment: 2 years is ideal

Step Five: Use existing partnerships to foster additional partnerships

Include in talking points

- Institutions already participating and benefits gained by each partnership
- Value of joining an existing and successful partnership program
- Value of aligning with other participating cultural institutions

Many thanks to the library professionals of Contra Costa County Libraries for sharing this valuable guide to ePASS/Discover & Go!

