

What is a Program?

Per the IMLS definition:

A program is any planned event which introduces the group attending to any of the broad range of library services or activities or which directly provides information to participants....Programs may also provide cultural, recreational, or educational information....

The following is a checklist to help you determine if an activity counts as a program:

- Did I plan and advertise the program in advance?
- Did my patrons learn anything new about the library and/or its resources or services?
- Was a library staff member or volunteer present to facilitate the program?
- Was the program open to more than one person?
- (For virtual events) If I were presenting this in person, would I consider this a program?



Count as programs



- Storytimes
- Computer classes
- Game or movie nights
- Book discussions
- Author visits
- Tours
- Planned storytimes at schools or daycares

Do not count as programs



- Library staff marching in a parade
- The library's booth at a local festival with no planned events
- The library holds an open house to kick off their summer reading program; there are no planned activities scheduled.

Neither **self-directed activities/passive programs** nor **social media engagement** meet the IMLS definition of a program and should not be counted as such.

Frequently Asked Questions

Our library offers Make and Take (Grab and Go, etc.) activities. Is it a program?

Make and Take activities can be recorded in 15-003 and 15-003a. Other self-directed activities (aka “passive programs”) are not tracked on the Annual Report.

Why don't passive programs or social media contests count as programs?

IMLS's definition of programming was originally created to track shared community events; expanding that definition would make “apples to apples” comparisons over the years impossible.

How do I decide if something's a drop-in program versus a self-directed activity? Ask yourself if the activity can be done (or is meant to be done) with almost entirely with no interaction of any kind—staff or fellow attendee. If so, it's likely a self-directed activity.

If I post a link to someone else's program (e.g., an author leads a story time), should I count the views?

Only count programs/attendance that are sponsored by the library or in which your library has some part in content creation. If you have an online event in which a group watches the state park video together and you lead a discussion of it after, that's a program. If you post the link alone, it's not.

What if it is a speaker we paid to record a video for us?

That is a library-sponsored program and would count as a synchronous virtual program.

We're doing a podcast. How would we count that?

Podcasts are counted as asynchronous programs. Record downloads/streams as your asynchronous participant count.

Is there a minimum time requirement for the length of a program? No. Programs can be as long or as short as you need them to be.

What if I share a video across multiple platforms – which one do I count?

While a single video will count as one program regardless of how many times you post it, you can count views from any/all platforms where it is posted.

What if I plan a program, but no one shows up, or nobody views it online? You may count programs toward your program total even if nobody attends.

Guidelines for Tracking Programming Statistics

Do I need to take role call at online programs?

It's not required. Per IMLS instructions, you should "[c]ount each **participant device** connected to a virtual program as a single attendee." ISL will continue to offer the option of recording the actual number of participants.

How should I count attendance by age group?

When answering age-group questions about attendance, ALL people at the program should be counted towards that program's **TARGET AUDIENCE**.

Example: 5 adults, 5 preschoolers, and 2 elementary aged kids attend a preschool story time. Record it as 12 attendees for a Children's Program.

Do not count staff or volunteers assisting with the program.

What if I my children's program doesn't fit into the 0-5 years or 6-11 years group because it's for all ages? Can I call it a general interest program?

NO. While General Interest is meant to capture programs targeted to multiple age groups, IMLS does not want libraries to use it as a substitute for the previous 0-11 category. It's important to show that libraries are doing children's programming, which is not reflected when they're labeled as general interest. **Make your best call.** If you categorize one as 0-5, maybe make the next 6-11.



If you have any questions about whether an activity qualifies as a library program, please contact the Library Development Office at (800) 451-6028 or ldo@library.in.gov.

Last Updated Dec 14, 2023

Guidelines for Tracking Programming Statistics

Track the following types of programs separately:

- Synchronous **(Live) In-Person** Programs
 - # of events (at the library vs off-campus)
 - # of people attending
 - Age group of target audience (0-5, 6-11, teens, adults, general)
- Synchronous **(Live) Virtual** Programs
 - # of streaming events (Facebook, Zoom, Skype, etc.)
 - # of live views/maximum concurrent live views (depending on platform)
 - Age group of target audience
- Asynchronous **(Recorded)** Programs
 - # of library-created program sessions posted online for asynchronous patron access. Count programs that were originally streamed live but later archived both as an asynchronous program and as a live virtual program.
 - # of page views/hits for either as the **first 30 days** the video is posted

