

*The Collaboration for Ongoing Visitor Experience Studies (COVES) is designed to unite museums across the country to systematically collect, analyze, and report on visitor experience data.*

The need for ongoing visitor data has never been greater.

We know that your institution is considering so many layers of change and responsiveness as you plan to reopen to your community. Planning to collect data about the visitor experience may be one of many things that you are thinking about and considering as a part of the arc of the visitor experience.

*When does it make sense to collect data again?*

**Begin collecting data as soon as you open!**

As our institutions reopen, we have an amazing opportunity to begin monitoring our visitors' experiences, perceptions, and demographics from the very beginning. Whether we open to the public slowly or with celebration and fanfare, we have the unique opportunity to collect visitor experience data from the start.

Here are a few thoughts from COVES members about how collecting data early and often will help their institutions better serve their visitors:

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*“There’s going to be a lot of interest in being able to compare who is coming post-pandemic with who came before. We are going to look to compare responses to the same questions, and we will want to look at it a lot more often so that we can make changes as we need to.” – Elisa Israel, Saint Louis Science Center*

*“Any time that we introduce a new question, I often find that I wish I had started asking about it a year ago. It’s important to begin data collection because your future self will thank you when you are able to answer questions you have about your audience. And, if you don’t have a record of the history, then you lose that ability.”  
– Brett Turner, New York Hall of Science*

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## COVES fits your museum's unique needs.

Built by and for museums, the COVES instrument is evolving to best meet the field's new challenges of re-opening during a health crisis and incorporating public health and safety guidelines. For the past five years, we have collected data from visitors through an in-person exit survey using a tablet... Not only are we changing and testing different data collection processes, from using QR codes or tablet stations to restructuring the data collector's role and invitation process, but a core group of museum professionals from research, evaluation, marketing, and HR are writing new question sets to help us understand and respond to our visitors' experiences to best meet our communities' needs.

Here are some of the ways that we are changing the core instrument and data collection processes to best support COVES museum's COVID-19 needs:

### **Possible data collection changes**

- Converting the survey to being accessible via a QR code from visitors' smartphones
- Creating a response station with hand sanitizer and disinfecting wipes for the tablet
- Offering an individually packaged stylus as a thank you gift that they use to complete the survey
- Changing the data collector approach to invite participation from a distance of six feet or more

### **Possible questions (Made things up as placeholders)**

- Were there enough hand sanitizer stations?
- How well did staff maintain appropriate physical distance?
- Was the number of visitors and staff on the floor appropriate?
- What did you think about or plan for before coming to the museum today?
- How easy was the online ticketing system?
- What other types of organizations are you comfortable visiting right now?

## Join COVES Now

We believe that starting data collection through COVES is so important for our museums' that we are offering a reduced membership during the pandemic. We are streamlining the onboarding process by moving data collection training online, the data cleaning process by routing all data through a single portal, and pausing all unique institution questions. By taking these steps, we are able to reduce the membership cost for this year.\*

[Contact us now](#) to get set up and collecting visitor data on re-opening day!

\*You can always join at the full member price to access more individualization of your survey and data.