

Your Voice Counts IV

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Executive Summary

The Association of Children's Museums (ACM) is continually striving to ensure its member services, member support and overall organizational strategic direction are directly tied to and driven by the needs of the membership. An important component of this process involves periodic research to collect a statistical profile on member needs, perceptions and concerns. The Association has entitled these research efforts the *ACM Your Voice Counts* program.

The first *Your Voice Counts* program was launched in 1996. The process was repeated in 1999 and 2004, with all efforts collecting a significant amount of data from the membership. This report presents the findings from the *Your Voice Counts IV* program, which was launched in January 2009.

The *Your Voice Counts IV* survey collected input from a total of 175 individuals who represent the full scope of the ACM membership. The information gathered is segmented by five key criteria to permit comparing results across a variety of member segments.

A desirable goal for any research program is to distill the findings into a single statement that cuts to the heart of the matter. This is a challenge for the *Your Voice Counts* survey given the wide-reaching nature of the 100+ pages of results produced from the data collected. Still, a few cornerstone issues emerge. The first is lack of awareness. This was a key finding from the 2004 survey, and it continues to pose a challenge for the Association. As ACM strives to increase its transparency as an organization, it must address this issue head on, as it is affecting members' perceptions not only of service offerings, but strategic undertakings and organizational direction.

Another cornerstone issue uncovered in the research is a decrease in member satisfaction metrics from the 2004 survey. The decrease is not dire — members still feel ACM is meeting or exceeding their expectations, and the Association receives very strong scores for its Net Promoter measurement, a new member satisfaction metric employed in the 2009 survey. The decline is substantial enough, however, to warrant closer examination of how member service is provided, especially given the need in our current economic climate to “do more with less.”

The remainder of this Executive Summary provides a brief encapsulation of key survey results. In addition to the narrative report sections that follow the Executive Summary, we encourage ACM to review the specialized tables in the Appendices and evaluate the lists of members' comments for greater insight into their issues of concern.

Sample Profile

- ✓ The sample is highly analogous to past *Your Voice Counts* samples, and a good representation of the overall ACM membership. The sample is well-balanced in terms of museum size (with operating budget used as the criterion for museum size), an important factor for the analysis given the often disparate needs of the “small” versus the “large” institutions.
- ✓ One-half of the sample consists of individuals who hold the top position at their museum (e.g., Executive Director, President or CEO). As in past *Your Voice Counts* surveys, it is difficult to determine membership length across the full sample since more than one-quarter are unsure how long their museum has been a member.
- ✓ About one in five of the respondents are part of the ACM leadership (e.g., a current or former Board of Directors or Committee Member). There are significant demographic differences between those in the Leadership category versus the Rank and File, with the Leadership far more likely to represent large, well-established museums.

Overarching Perceptions of ACM

- ✓ Most members (68.6%) consider ACM to be their primary professional association, a small dip from the 75.9% response received in 2004. As before, AAM and ASTC remain the most popular associations named by those who do not consider ACM to be their primary association. The peak “ACM bond” is seen among the smallest museums, the Leadership and the more recent joiners.
- ✓ Although ACM continues to meet or exceed the expectations of a large majority of its members, the Association has slipped in its ratings from 2004 on key satisfaction metrics. While satisfaction data remain positive, it is clear that the overall sentiment of the membership has shifted from most feeling ACM is exceeding their expectations, to most feeling ACM is just meeting their expectations.
- ✓ Another metric that sheds light on overarching perceptions is the Net Promoter Score (NPS), a system developed by business consultant Fred Reichheld. The data for ACM is highly positive — the Association receives an overall NPS score of 48.5%, which equates to a solid endorsement of ACM across the membership. Scores vary across segments in much the same pattern seen with other satisfaction metrics explored in the survey, with peak scores awarded by the smallest museums, the Leadership and recent joiners.

- ✓ One of the most encouraging metrics is the significant number of members (72.6%) who agree with the statement “I trust ACM will take actions/positions that are in the best interest of the children’s museum field.” A smaller number, but still a majority, agree that ACM is “in tune” with trends that are happening in their museum. Members are less certain on other issues explored in the survey, but tend to take a positive stance more often than a negative stance. Exceptions relate to how members are elected to the ACM Board and how cities are selected for InterActivity. In both cases members are about equally divided between agreement, disagreement and uncertainty when asked if they understood the process for each.
- ✓ No progress has been made regarding members’ opinions regarding how well the Board is representative of the field — the percentage agreeing with the statement “I feel the ACM Board is representative of the field” has dropped from 31.9% in 2004 to 29.7% in 2009.
- ✓ One potential point of concern is seen regarding the statement “I feel my voice is being heard by the ACM leadership and staff.” The number who disagree with the statement increases steadily with membership length, with 22.9% of the long-term members disagreeing.

ACM’s Strategic Direction and Goals

- ✓ While ACM continues to receive a significant endorsement of its strategic direction, the ratings have slid since 2004. The percentage feeling ACM is moving in the right direction as an organization has dropped from 74.1% to 45.7%. This does not mean, however, that Members are displeased — only 3.4% feel ACM is moving in the wrong direction. The decline in the percentage of those not feeling ACM is moving in the right direction is due to increases in the number who feel ACM is staying constant, or are unsure/have no opinion regarding ACM’s strategic direction.
- ✓ Familiarity with ACM’s strategic goals is reasonably strong, with a majority of members reporting that they are at least somewhat familiar with all five of the goals examined in the survey. There is, however, room for improvement. Only one goal — “make visible and promote the value of children’s museums nationally and internationally” — receives “highly familiar” ratings from a majority of the respondents.

- ✓ The following ranking emerges when the members are asked to prioritize ACM's strategic goals as to the level of importance to their museum:
 1. Make visible and promote the value of children's museums nationally and internationally.
 2. Build the capacity of children's museums to achieve sustainability and growth.
 3. Use the collective power of children's museums to leverage innovative opportunities for the field.
 4. Strengthen the network of children's museum professionals.
 5. Ensure the future of ACM with strong leadership and sound financial practices.

ACM Priorities

- ✓ The members want ACM to expend the most amount of time and resources on serving as an advocate for children's museums, and providing members with professional development and networking opportunities. However, while these two areas are top-ranked, there is significant support for several other areas — no individual area takes a commanding lead. ACM members are not single-issue driven, but “want it all” when it comes to the areas they would like ACM to address. The only area that lags is recognition opportunities, which shows lower appeal across all member segments.
- ✓ Most respondents feel ACM has at least somewhat advanced the field's knowledge in key areas through the Association's Leadership Initiatives (Good to Grow!, Playing for Keeps and Diversity in Action). As seen previously in several other survey areas, lack of awareness is significant, with one-third or more of the members unsure of how well ACM is advancing the field's knowledge.
- ✓ Corporate support/sponsorship is the most pressing economic concern by a wide margin, identified by 43.4% of the members. Foundation support, the next most significant challenge, is cited by only 17.1%. Concerns regarding corporate support/sponsorship are top-ranked across nearly every member segment, often by a two-to-one or greater margin.

ACM Communication

- ✓ E-Update is the most popular response by far when members identify their primary information channel (e.g., the method they most often use to stay informed about ACM). Selected by 34.9%, E-update is followed by InterActivity (15.4%) and the Members Only section of the ACM Web site (12%). E-Update remains top-ranked across nearly all segments, and is particularly important for the most recent joiners.

- ✓ Satisfaction with their primary ACM information channel is fairly good, with 30.3% of the respondents reporting that they are “highly” satisfied, and 44% reporting that they are “somewhat” satisfied. Dissatisfaction is virtually nil (0.6%). Satisfaction is strongest among those who primarily rely on *Hand to Hand* as their information channel.

- ✓ About seven of every ten respondents have a logon and password to the ACM Members Only Web site. Levels are high among most segments, dropping most significantly among the recent joiners and those from the largest museums. Access to the site is typically not limited to just the respondent, with 58.8% reporting at least one additional staff person at their museum has access. The situation is mixed regarding having a designated staff person at the museum who is responsible for disseminating ACM information to staff — 40% report that there is such a person; 40% report there is not.

ACM Reciprocal Membership Program

- ✓ Nearly two-thirds (63.4%) of the respondents participate in the ACM Reciprocal Membership Program. Participation levels are particularly strong among the larger museums, the long-term members and the Leadership, with as many as 88.6% participating.

- ✓ The survey examined member reaction to several proposed changes/modifications to the Reciprocal Program. Listed below is a summary of responses (all results are based on the 111 respondents who are Program participants). Leading responses in each area are noted in **bold**.

	Support a distance exclusion policy	27.9%
Distance exclusion	Prefer to leave the Program as-is	61.3%
	Not sure/no opinion	10.8%
	60 miles	31.5%
Appropriate distance for a distance exclusion policy	90 miles	23.4%
	Other (median of 30 miles)	15.3%
	Not sure/no opinion	29.7%
Membership price point	\$100 is the best representation of value	60.4%
	Another amount (median of \$125)	32.4%
	Not sure/no opinion	7.2%

Association of Children's Museums

	Should cover a set number of people	53.1%
Program coverage	Keep it open-ended	42.3%
	Not sure/no opinion	4.5%
Require name on membership card	Yes	64.0%
	No	20.7%
	Not sure/no opinion	15.3%
Require presenting permanent membership cards for admission (e.g., deny temporary membership cards)	Yes	18.0%
	No	71.2%
	Not sure/no opinion	10.8%
Eliminate membership card stickers	Yes	28.8%
	No	50.5%
	Not sure	20.7%
Establish a residency requirement (e.g., members must reside in the same state/province as the museum of which they are a member)	Yes	18.9%
	No	69.4%
	Not sure/no opinion	11.7%