



VISITOR EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE

20  26

A MORE PERFECT UNION





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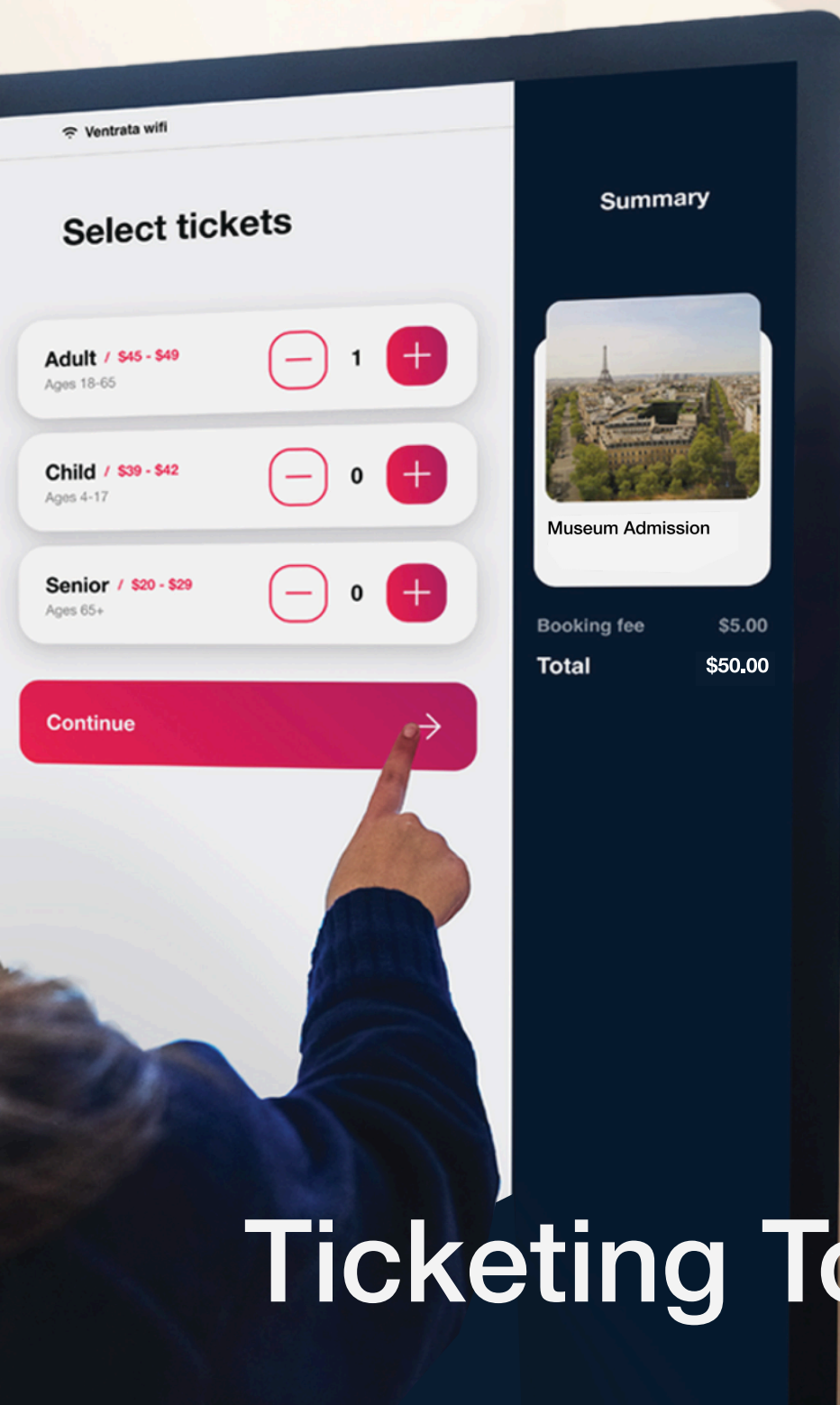
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The 2026 Visitor Experience Conference
is sponsored by [Ventrata](#)



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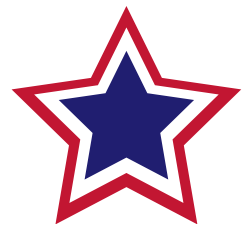


Learn More

Ticketing Together



WELCOME



Welcome to the 15th annual Visitor Experience Conference! We are thrilled to welcome you back to Philadelphia, a city that's known for the founding of the Visitor Experience Group (and maybe a few other things too). Since this is a big year and many of us on the VEX team are on our home turf, we have a lot planned for your Philly experience. You'll be dining at some of our favorite spots for the dine-arounds. We'll be taking you to some of our favorite institutions across the Delaware Valley. You might even end up on a late-night Wawa run with us after the after party.

In addition to all of that, we have an amazing conference planned for you. As always, the day of sessions and the keynote address are pay-what-you-wish, there's a stellar lineup of thought-provoking workshops, and we're offering more tours and events than we ever have! We are so excited to host you here in the City of Brotherly Love to gather together, as so many have before, to discuss how we can contribute to a more perfect union.



THE VEX BOARD



Nicole Krom
President



Kyle Cantarera
Vice President



Patrick Wittwer
Vice President



Tiffany Allen
At-Large



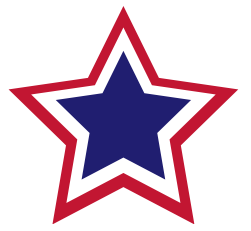
Kyle Porter Avery
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Chair



Mark Baird
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Samantha Hipe-Moylan
Adam Kupiec
Amanda Morton
Julia Quinn
Tekla Simon



CONTENT KEY



Accessibility



Community



Data



Fundraising



Staff Engagement



Technology



Training

*Look for these
icons next to
sessions and
workshops for a
general idea of the
content.*

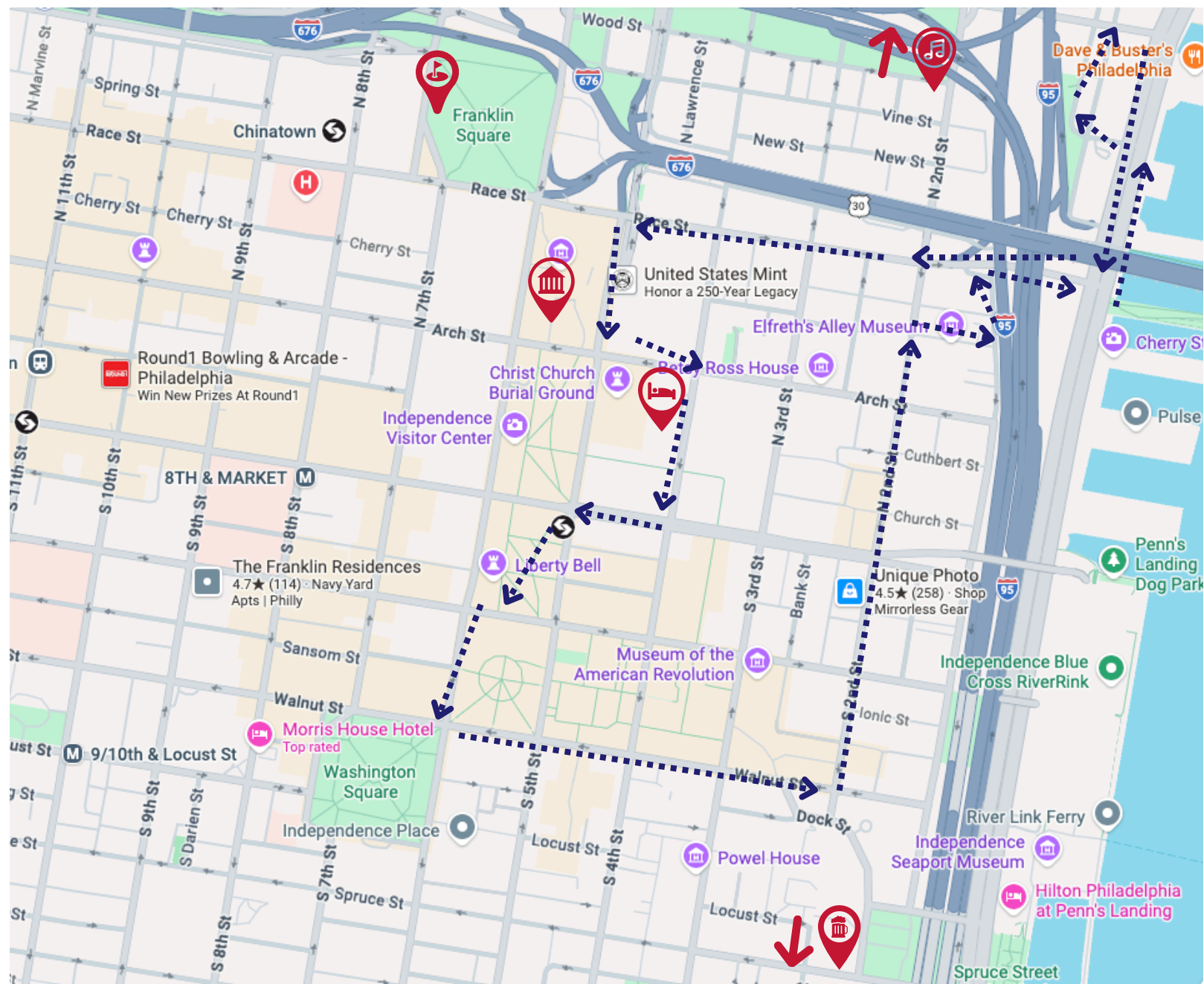
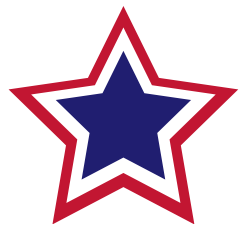
EXPLORE PHILLY

Show your conference badge for free entry to the museums listed below

- Eastern State: Show conference badge for entry. This wouldn't be valid for Halloween Nights.
- Penn Museum: The code "VEX" is valid from 10/9-10/18 to allow anyone traveling outside of the conference dates to use the code.
- Mummers Museum: Show conference badge for entry.
- Philadelphia Zoo: Show conference badge for entry.
- Franklin Institute: Either pickup tickets or conference badge
- The Rodin Museum
- Cliveden (Free on 10/10)
- Calder Gardens
- United States Mint at Philadelphia
- The Fabric Workshop and Museum
- Liberty Bell Center
- Woodmere (Free every Sunday)
- The Science History Institute
- Institute of Contemporary Art
- Franklin Square Fountain Show (runs from noon – 2pm and 5pm to close daily, every 30 minutes)



OLD CITY



National Constitution Center



Wyndham Philadelphia Historic District
(VEX Hotel)



Penn's Plan Walking Tour Route



Mummers Museum (3 blocks South)



Franklin Square



700 Club (3 blocks North)

TREAT YOURSELF!

Shop in our online store and support the mission of the Visitor Experience Group!



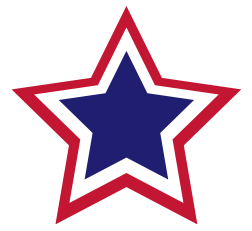
SUNDAY, OCT 11

- **PENN'S PLAN WALKING TOUR**
 - 12:00 – 3:00 PM
 - BEGINS & ENDS AT VEX HOTEL AT 400 ARCH ST
- **VEX REGISTRATION TABLE**
 - 3:00 – 6:00 PM
 - VEX HOTEL LOBBY AT 400 ARCH ST
- **DINE AROUNDS**
 - 5:30 PM
 - MEET IN VEX HOTEL LOBBY AT 400 ARCH ST





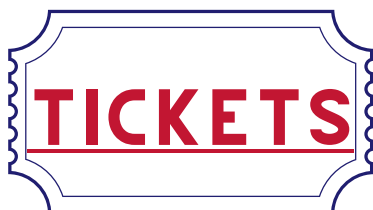
TOUR: PENN'S PLAN FOR PHILADELPHIA



Join VEX VP and longtime Philly resident Pat Wittwer for his tour focused on William Penn's original plan for Philadelphia, what parts of it remain, what has been lost, and what we're currently doing right and wrong. This is a walking tour that will cover over three centuries of Philadelphia history over the course of a 3.5-mile walk. The tour begins and ends at the VEX26PHL conference hotel lobby.

Pat developed this tour when he was Director of the Elfreth's Alley Association, a nonprofit dedicated to the preservation and interpretation of 33 historic homes in Old City. This tour will include a Wawa picnic lunch on Cherry Street Pier.

Please wear comfortable clothes and shoes and be mindful of the uneven sidewalks and (not actually) historic paving you will encounter on this walking tour of Historic Philadelphia.



Presented by:



MONDAY, OCT 12

- **SESSIONS & KEYNOTE**
 - 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM
 - NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER
- **VISITORS ARE A DRAG AFTER PARTY**
 - 6:00 – 8:30 PM
 - MUMMERS MUSEUM
- **KARAOKE AFTER THE AFTER PARTY**
 - 9:00 PM
 - THE 700, 700 N 2ND ST,



MONDAY OCTOBER 12 ROOMS

- **Ground Floor**

- Delegates' Café Private Dining Room
- Freedom Classroom
- Kimmel Theater

- **Second Floor**

- F.M. Kirby Auditorium
- Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook
- VEX Registration Desk

- **Third Floor**

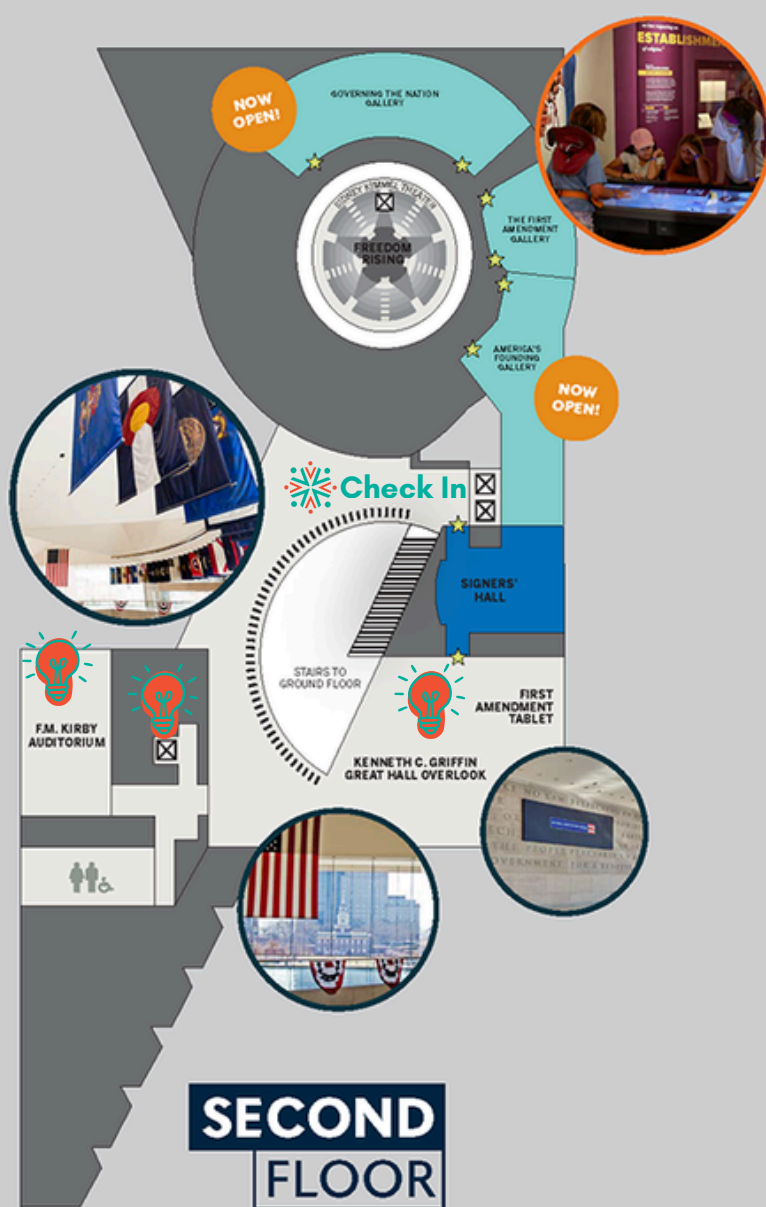
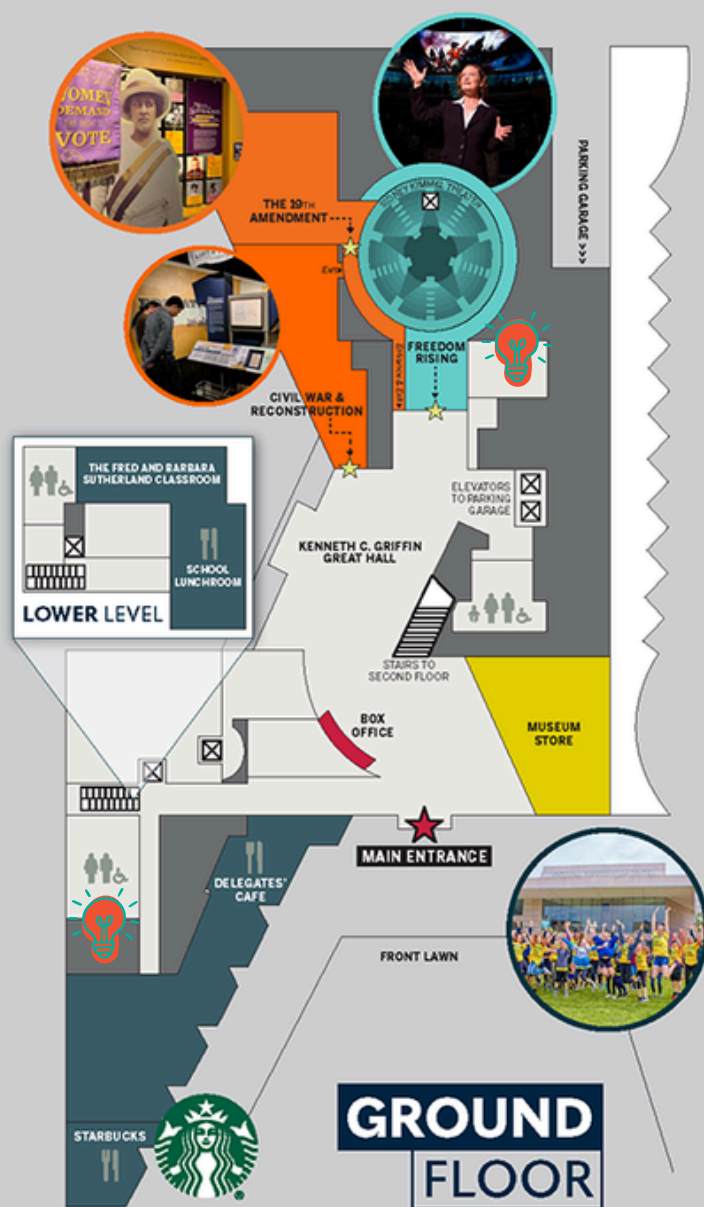
- John C. Bogle Chairman's Room
 - *Use the elevator or stairs by F.M. Kirby auditorium on 2nd floor or outside of Delegates Café on the Ground floor*

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



EXPLORE OUR MUSEUM

Welcome to the National Constitution Center!
Here's What You Can Experience Today:



Key: ★ Main Entrance ⬤ Box Office ★ Exhibit Entrance ♿ Restrooms 🍴 Dining ■ Dining Area



Tag us on social media!
@constitutionctr

Find resources online at
constitutioncenter.org

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER





KEYNOTE ADDRESS COUNCIL OF FIRSTS



Philadelphia is the cradle of the American institutional identity. It is home to the nation's first botanical garden, its first zoo, its first hospital, and its first library, to name a few. But what does it mean to be the "first" for two and a half centuries?

Join us for a landmark Town Hall featuring a "Council of Firsts." We are bringing together the visionaries behind Philadelphia's foundational institutions—the original blueprints for how Americans interact with nature, science, and culture.

In this candid conversation, we will explore:

- The Weight of Legacy: How the "first" institutions have preserved history while evolving to meet the demands of the modern world.
- The Evolution of the Mission: How spaces originally designed for elite "cabinets of curiosity" transformed into vibrant, inclusive community hubs.
- The Challenge of Progress: How these historic pillars are reimagining their roles to address 21st-century challenges—from climate change to social equity.

Come hear from the guardians of our oldest treasures as they define the next 250 years of the Philadelphia story.

Keynote sponsors:

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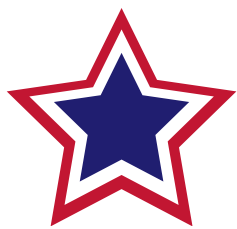
Exclusive Ticketing
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Anchor connects your ticketing,
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KEYNOTE ADDRESS PANELISTS



Maitreyi Roy

Executive Director, Bartram's
Garden



John Orr

Executive Director, Art-Reach



Jo-Elle Mogerman

President and Chief Executive
Officer, Philadelphia Zoo



Daniel Corti

Guest Experience Manager,
Philadelphia International Airport



Jessica Sharpe

Chief Revenue and Engagement
Officer, Pennsylvania Academy of
the Fine Arts



Intelligent ticketing to reach your peak™

growth • engagement • insights • membership • visitation

ac-me /'akmē/ noun

from Greek akmé "peak, highest point"
the point or pinnacle at which something is
best, of highest quality, or most successful.

Providing 10+ years of consultative support,
innovative functionality, and flexible APIs for
museums, zoos, aquariums, gardens, and
other arts, science and cultural institutions.

We understand your goals and have walked
in your shoes. Please consider ACME if you:

- Have an outdated or expensive ticketing system that is difficult to manage.
- Use an "all-in-one" system that is not flexible enough for your evolving needs.
- Have growing chargeback losses and disjointed payment acceptance support.
- Want to be more efficient in your visitor services operations and more effective growing memberships, events, group sales, programs, and donations.

The team at ACME will help you implement
a better solution that offers insights and
actions to support your mission.

- Best-in-class open solution architecture, integrated to leading CRM, business intelligence, and distribution partners.
- Responsive and knowledgeable support team that listens, understands, and finds solutions to your operational, technical and financial challenges.
- Embedded online and POS payment acceptance with advanced risk and fraud mitigation capabilities.

ACME's **Unified Visitation Platform** makes it easy for
your team to support the entire guest journey, creating
a seamless experience for your visitors and members.



SESSION BLOCK 1

8:00 – 9:00 AM

- **Making the World a Better Place through SUPERB Service**
 - *John C. Bogle Chairman's Room*
- **To Form a More Perfect Field Trip**
 - *F.M. Kirby Auditorium*
- **Building Community Trust through Affordable Admission**
 - *Delegates' Café Private Dining Room*
- **Everyone Is Onstage: How Performing Arts Transforms the Visitor Experience**
 - *Freedom Classroom*

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



MAKING THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE THROUGH SUPERB SERVICE

8:00 - 9:00 AM John C. Bogle Chairman's Room

Frontline staff shape every museum visit. This session introduces the SUPERB Service Model and Gallery Host program from the Chrysler Museum of Art. Participants explore six mission-aligned practices that build connection, confidence, and collaboration—elevating daily interactions to create welcoming, inclusive, human-centered experiences that inspire a lifelong love of museums.

PRESENTERS:

**Karen Dutton, Manager of
Visitor Services, The Chrysler
Museum of Art**

Takeaways:

- Roadmap to reframing the frontline from passive monitoring to active hosting and relationship-building.
- Staff empowerment; breaking down departmental silos to improve the visitor journey.
- SUPERB service model that positions frontline staff as cultural ambassadors transforming institutions into spaces of belonging.



VEX CONTACT
ERICA VON SCHENK

John C. Bogle Chairman's Room



TO FORM A MORE PERFECT FIELD TRIP

8:00 - 9:00 AM F.M. Kirby Auditorium

In 2024, the National Constitution Center (NCC) decided to retire the long-running Constitutional Ambassadors Program and develop several new programs to take its place. This presentation will discuss why the NCC made this clean break and the steps it took to create new programs that better suited its audience.

PRESENTERS:

Brian Krisch, Manager of Training and Program Development, National Constitution Center

Elise Jacobsen, Museum Programs Coordinator, National Constitution Center

Takeaways:

- Don't be afraid to admit when programs aren't working.
- It's okay to start over from scratch.
- A good museum program exists to spark interest in the subject; the audience will not be experts at the end.



VEX CONTACT
TIFFANY ALLEN

F.M. Kirby Auditorium



BUILDING COMMUNITY TRUST THROUGH AFFORDABLE ADMISSION

8:00 - 9:00 AM Delegates' Café Private Dining Room

Join Art-Reach to learn about various economic and financial barriers that can prevent people with disabilities from visiting cultural sites. Using community-driven data and examples from the Art-Reach ACCESS Program, we'll explore how affordable admission can build trust and strengthen relationships between the disability and cultural arts communities.

Takeaways:

- Greater understanding of the various economic barriers that people with disabilities experience, both in their daily lives and in arts engagement.
- Examples of how local Philadelphia institutions navigate the cost barrier through the Art-Reach ACCESS Program.
- Data-driven insights that reflect the positive impact of affordable admission, and how it can ultimately lead to increased visitation, revenue, and trust with the disability community

PRESENTERS:

Alex Boyle, Director of Programs, Art-Reach

Julian Harper, Director of Communications, Art-Reach

Abbey Judd, Director of Advocacy and Impact, Art-Reach



VEX CONTACT
PAT WITTEWER

Delegates' Café Private Dining Room



EVERYONE IS ONSTAGE: HOW PERFORMING ARTS TRANSFORMS THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

8:00 - 9:00 AM Freedom Classroom

What if every staff member saw themselves as part of the show? This session explores how performance principles (storytelling, presence, and character) can transform frontline interactions into joy-filled, inclusive experiences that make guests feel seen, valued, and connected.

PRESENTERS:

Tanner Linden, Guest Experience Manager, Santa Barbara Zoo

Clayton Barry, Performing Arts Supervisor, Santa Barbara Zoo

Takeaways:

- A practical framework - Attendees will learn how to apply core performing arts techniques (presence, character, narrative) to any frontline role, not just entertainers.
- Tangible strategies - How to move beyond a “shows team” and embed performance culture across guest services, operations, and leadership.
- Real-world case study - How the Santa Barbara Zoo increased engagement by integrating immersive storytelling into daily operations.



VEX CONTACT
JEN ACORD

Freedom Classroom



SESSION BLOCK 2

10:40 – 11:40 AM

- **Beyond the Headcount: Turning Frontline Stories into Strategic Data**
 - *John C. Bogle Chairman's Room*
- **You Are Welcome**
 - *F.M. Kirby Auditorium*
- **Charting Our Liftoff to the Galaxy**
 - *Delegates' Café Private Dining Room*
- **Frontline Power-up: Empowering your Front Line to Optimize Guest Satisfaction**
 - *Freedom Classroom*

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER



BEYOND THE HEADCOUNT: TURNING FRONTLINE STORIES INTO STRATEGIC DATA

10:40 - 11:40 AM John C. Bogle Chairman's Room

Unlock institutional intelligence beyond attendance metrics. This interactive session introduces the "Visitor Interaction Protocol" (VIP), a simple, real-time reporting framework that captures frontline insights and visitor sentiment. Through case study and hands-on design exercises, participants will build a customizable tool to transform anecdotal observations into actionable, cross-departmental strategy.

PRESENTERS:

Andy Cushen, Manager of Visitor Experience and Volunteerism, Clyfford Still Museum

Participants will leave with:

- A customizable template for a "Visitor Interaction Protocol" (VIP).
- A framework for identifying high-value qualitative themes with repeatable workflows for sharing insights.
- Strategies for elevating frontline staff voices in leadership conversations.



VEX CONTACT
JEN ACORD

John C. Bogle Chairman's Room



YOU ARE WELCOME

10:40 - 11:40 AM F.M. Kirby Auditorium

"You Are Welcome" provides participants with a foundational understanding of the importance of accessibility in visitor services, ensuring programs remain open to everyone, regardless of ability or background. The session includes an overview of the social model of disability, and the role guest services plays in addressing the inclusion gap.

PRESENTERS:

Ava Locks, Accessibility Manager, City of Philadelphia, Parks and Recreation Department

Brian O'Mahoney, Founding Member, ACCESSforALL

Elka Rifkin, Founding Member, ACCESSforALL

Takeaways

- An understanding of the pillars of visitor services and guest experience.
- An understanding of how to identify and address barriers to access and inclusion
- Disability Etiquette best practices and tips for inclusive visitor service practices



VEX CONTACT
ERICA VON SCHENK

F.M. Kirby Auditorium



CHARTING OUR LIFTOFF TO THE GALAXY

10:40 - 11:40 AM Delegates' Café Private Dining Room

Change is constant in our work—but how do we prepare our team, guests, and members for a major shift? This presentation examines our rollout of a new ticketing system, highlighting how we prepared for this change, supported staff and guests through uncertainty, and managed the many adjustments required for a smooth, successful transition.

PRESENTERS:

Maria Matlock, Visitor Center Manager, Longwood Gardens

Jeff Harrison, Associate Director of Guest Admissions, Longwood Gardens

Takeaways:

- Preparation Builds Confidence- Proactive planning, early communication, and staff training set the foundation for a smoother transition.
- Pivot with Purpose- Even the best plans face disruption—how you adjust, communicate changes, and maintain intentionality determines success.
- Positivity Is Contagious- Team mindset matters. Confidence, composure, and a solutions-focused attitude shape the guest experience during change.



VEX CONTACT
TIFFANY ALLEN

Delegates' Café Private Dining Room



FRONTLINE POWER-UP: EMPOWERING YOUR FRONT LINE TO OPTIMIZE GUEST SATISFACTION

10:40 - 11:40 AM Freedom Classroom

We'll be discussing the benefits of empowering your frontline to make the best decisions for your visitors, provide service recovery, and deliver an experience that goes above and beyond!

PRESENTERS:

Bayo Fayemi, Director of Guest Services, SUMMIT One Vanderbilt

Takeaways:

- Best Practices of Service Recovery.
- Benefits of Empowering Frontline Team Members.
- How does an empowered frontline team build stronger leaders?



VEX CONTACT
PAT WITTWER

Freedom Classroom



LUNCH

11:40 AM – 1:10 PM

- **Chinatown**

- There are a ton of great restaurants in Chinatown. Head out the main entrance and turn right on Arch Street. Walk four blocks - most of your options will be between 10th and 12th Streets on either Arch St. or Race St.

- **Old City**

- Head two blocks south on 6th St. to Market St. and turn left. There's a whole host of eateries between 2nd and 4th Streets.

- **Wawa**

- Located two blocks south of the museum at 6th and Chestnut Streets for kiosk ordering of a variety of sandwiches. Take out only.

EXPLORE NCC

- **Museum Store** - Open from 11:00 AM - 4:00 PM
 - Be sure to pick up some souvenirs from the Museum Store!
- **Exhibits** - The following exhibits will be open from 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM:
 - Signers' Hall
 - America's Founding Gallery
 - First Amendment Gallery



NEW ENGLAND

CONNECTICUT

- 32. William Samuel Johnson
- 41. Roger Sherman

MASSACHUSETTS

- 2. Rufus King
- 3. Nathaniel Gorham

NEW HAMPSHIRE

- 22. Nicholas Gilman
- 23. John Langdon

DISSENTERS

- 16. Elbridge Gerry
Massachusetts
- 17. Edmund Jennings Randolph
Virginia
- 18. George Mason
Virginia

MID-ATLANTIC

NEW JERSEY

- 5. Jonathan Dayton
- 25. William Livingston
- 26. William Paterson
- 28. David Brearley

NEW YORK

- 30. Alexander Hamilton

PENNSYLVANIA

- 9. James Wilson
- 10. Thomas Mifflin
- 11. Jared Ingersoll
- 12. Robert Morris
- 13. George Clymer
- 14. Benjamin Franklin
- 15. Gouverneur Morris
- 33. Thomas FitzSimons

UPPER SOUTH

DELAWARE

- 4. John Dickinson
- 8. George Read
- 27. Jacob Broom
- 39. Richard Bassett
- 40. Gunning Bedford, Jr.

MARYLAND

- 6. Daniel Carroll
- 35. Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer
- 37. James McHenry

VIRGINIA

- 1. George Washington
- 36. John Blair
- 38. James Madison

LOWER SOUTH

GEORGIA

- 31. William Few
- 42. Abraham Baldwin

NORTH CAROLINA

- 7. Hugh Williamson
- 24. William Blount
- 34. Richard Dobbs Spaight

SOUTH CAROLINA

- 19. Charles Pinckney
- 20. Charles Cotesworth Pinckney
- 21. John Rutledge
- 29. Pierce Butler

SESSION BLOCK 3

1:10 – 2:10 PM

- **Beyond the Box Office: Modern Business Development Ideas for Cultural Icons**
 - *Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook*
- **From Vibes to Variables: Define It, Capture It, Improve It**
 - *John C. Bogle Chairman's Room*
- **A More Perfect Welcome: Partnering with Disability Communities**
 - *F.M. Kirby Auditorium*
- **Cultivating Care, Comfort, and Confidence for Front-Line Teams**
 - *Delegates' Café Private Dining Room*
- **Access for All! Working with Community Partners for a Brighter Future**
 - *Freedom Classroom*



BEYOND THE BOX OFFICE: MODERN BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IDEAS FOR CULTURAL ICONS

1:10 - 2:10 PM Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook

Discover innovative strategies to expand your reach and craft a seamless customer journey. In this session, you will come away with ideas on how to build a high-impact network of strategic partners and design unforgettable, buzzworthy experiences that drive organizational revenue and get everyone talking.

PRESENTERS:

**Mich Franklin, Sales Manager,
Ventrata**



Takeaways:

- Local partners are an extension of your box office, include them, reward them.
- Partnerships are a sales strategy AND a marketing strategy- include them to your marketing mix.
- Don't hold back- get creative- Ad-hoc packages and one-off promotions drive revenue and establish relationships.



VEX CONTACT
PAT WITTWER

Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook



FROM VIBES TO VARIABLES: DEFINE IT, CAPTURE IT, IMPROVE IT

1:10 - 2:10 PM John C. Bogle Chairman's Room

Define success first—then work backwards. In this interactive session, learn a repeatable system to turn frontline interactions into measurable outcomes: clarify what “success” means, define a “qualified lead,” and capture consistent data with simple digital workflows. Leave with templates you can use immediately.

PRESENTERS:

Seth Lieber, CXO, Seth Lieber Creative LLC

Takeaways:

- Success Definition Canvas: a one-page method to define “success” in measurable terms (outcomes → behaviors → 3–5 metrics).
- Qualified Lead Rubric + Field Set: a clear definition and minimum required fields so leads are actionable, not noise.
- Capture-to-Action Workflow: a simple digital intake + weekly review ritual that turns data into training/coaching and continuous improvement.



VEX CONTACT
JEN ACORD

John C. Bogle Chairman's Room



A MORE PERFECT WELCOME: PARTNERING WITH DISABILITY COMMUNITIES

1:10 - 2:10 PM F.M. Kirby Auditorium

Building meaningful partnerships with disability communities strengthens cultural connection, accessibility efforts, and audience growth. This session introduces practical engagement strategies, programmatic ideas, examples, and tried-and-true methods for disability community inclusion. Discover how to build “a more perfect welcome” between cultural institutions and the communities they serve.

Takeaways:

- Structured approach to making connections with your local disability community.
- Replicable examples and ideas for accessible programming
- Practical lessons about accessibility learned from experience with disability community engagement and programming.

PRESENTERS:

Dani Rose, Director of Cultural Access, Open Door Arts

Alex Boyle, Director of Programs, Art-Reach

This session is sponsored by **Capption**



VEX CONTACT
TIFFANY ALLEN

F.M. Kirby Auditorium



CULTIVATING CARE, COMFORT, AND CONFIDENCE FOR FRONT-LINE TEAMS

1:10 - 2:10 PM Delegates' Café Private Dining Room

Every day brings the unexpected in Visitor Experience! How can we ensure everyone has the tools to navigate this unpredictability? This session explores how a cross-departmental team worked together to ensure front-line staff felt informed, supported, and empowered before opening a large-scale exhibit on local LGBTQIA+ history in St. Louis.

PRESENTERS:

Erin Ray, Manager of Visitor Experience, Missouri History Museum

Takeaways:

- Strategies to affirm front-line staff's autonomy in guest interactions, while remaining consistent with institutional mission and messaging
- Ways to prepare teams for potentially adverse visitor interactions and de-escalation without prompting additional anxiety
- Approaches to recenter and revise institutional policies when you anticipate they may need to be enforced



VEX CONTACT
ERICA VON SCHENK

Delegates' Café Private Dining Room



ACCESS FOR ALL WORKING WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE

1:10 - 2:10 PM Freedom Classroom

In this polarizing time, welcoming spaces for all are essential for a brighter future. Based on ongoing accessibility projects at the Historic Sites of the Morris County Park Commission, this session explores working with partner groups to achieve tangible and cost-effective accessibility objectives for your museum or historic site.

Takeaways:

- For museum professionals to see what is accomplishable on a tight budget or limited staffing.
- For museum professionals to understand what you can accomplish with community partner organizations.
- For museum professionals to have a place to start or continue on their accessibility goals.

PRESENTERS:

Alexsandra Simakowicz,
Senior Historic Program
Specialist, Morris County
Park Commission,
Fosterfields Living Historical
Farm

Elsa Zavoda, Senior Vice
President of Programs, Vision
Loss Alliance

Lukas Franck, GDMI (Guide
Dog Mobility Instructor),
COMS (Certified Orientation
and Mobility Instructor)



VEX CONTACT
JULIA QUINN

Freedom Classroom



SESSION BLOCK 4

2:20 – 3:20 PM

- **An Exercise in Trust - Building a Museum-Quality Space for a Non-Museum Client**
 - *Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook*
- **Small Teams, Big Impact: Volunteers That Elevate Every Visit**
 - *John C. Bogle Chairman's Room*
- **Museums for All: Building Accessibility into the Everyday**
 - *F.M. Kirby Auditorium*
- **Make It Your Business: Creating Unique Experiences for Corporate Guests**
 - *Delegates' Café Private Dining Room*
- **Designing Sensory Guides for Live Performance**
 - *Freedom Classroom*



AN EXERCISE IN TRUST BUILDING A MUSEUM-QUALITY SPACE FOR A NON-MUSEUM CLIENT

2:20 - 3:20 PM Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook

Explore the challenges and successes of creating a museum-quality exhibit within the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia. Collaborators share how trust unified the team, how they overcame spatial constraints, and used interactivity and gamification to communicate complex content to diverse audiences, including students.

Takeaways:

- Lessons learned in assembling a collaborative, cross-disciplinary team suited to a non-traditional museum project.
- Designing a welcoming environment when security is a concern.
- Creative solutions for adapting to existing infrastructure and spatial limitations.

PRESENTERS:

**Casey Gallagher, Principal,
EwingCole**

Dan Bosin, President, Dan Bosin Associates

**Andrew Hill, Associate VP of
Economic Education, Federal
Reserve Bank of Philadelphia**

**Bernhard Mueller, Managing
Partner, Quatrefoil
Associates**

Marie Ruisard, Project Architect, EwingCole

**Tim Lay, Principal and
Creative Director, Northern
Light**



VEX CONTACT
PAT WITTWER

Kenneth C. Griffin Great Hall Overlook



SMALL TEAMS, BIG IMPACT: VOLUNTEERS THAT ELEVATE EVERY VISIT

2:20 - 3:20 PM John C. Bogle Chairman's Room

Small museums run lean, but volunteers can transform every visit. This session focuses on retaining, motivating, and developing volunteers so they feel valued and essential. We'll explore mindset shifts and scalable strategies for culture, communication, and belonging. Leave with ideas to strengthen programs, foster growth, and create personal, memorable experiences.

Takeaways:

- Keep & Grow — Simple, scalable ways to retain, motivate, and develop volunteers so they feel vital (and stay).
- Culture in Action — Playbooks for appreciation, communication, and belonging that tiny teams can actually sustain.
- Visitor Lift — How volunteer confidence and clarity translate into a more personal, memorable guest experience.

This session is sponsored by **Volgistics**



VEX CONTACT
JULIA QUINN

John C. Bogle Chairman's Room



MUSEUMS FOR ALL: BUILDING ACCESSIBILITY INTO THE EVERYDAY

2:20 - 3:20 PM F.M. Kirby Auditorium

Incorporating accessibility as a core value ensures that all visitors are engaged and welcomed into the museum. Come learn how the NCC made accessibility the cornerstone of museum culture, programs, and policy, from revising their visitor services training, broadening the tools available to guests, and building partnerships in the community.

Takeaways:

- How to write accessible visitor service policy
- Ways to incorporate accessibility into programs
- Training staff in accessibility and inclusivity

PRESENTERS:

**Anne Ciskanik, Manager of
Museum Engagement,
National Constitution Center**

**Kristina Marinello, Senior
Director of Museum
Experiences, National
Constitution Center**

**Brian Krisch, Manager of
Training & Program
Development, National
Constitution Center**

**Mike Madeja, Director of
Education, Independence
Seaport Museum**

**Simon Bonenfant, Outreach
Coordinator and Vision
Council Member, Philly Touch
Tours**

VEX CONTACT
SAMANTHA HIPE-
MOYLAN

F.M. Kirby Auditorium



MAKE IT YOUR BUSINESS: CREATING UNIQUE EXPERIENCES FOR CORPORATE GUESTS

2:20 - 3:20 PM Delegates' Café Private Dining Room

The corporate guest is an important asset for museums. This panel addresses how to welcome the corporate guest, manage their complex needs, and navigate cross-departmental coordination. The benefits can provide meaningful long-term engagement, membership, and sponsorship opportunities.

- Effectively handle the booking needs and logistics of corporate group visitors.
- Tailor experiences to meet group expectations and drive repeat bookings.
- Motivate corporate guests to convert into business, individual, family members and more.

PRESENTERS:

Karen Hollywood, Director of Corporate and Foundation Engagement, Grounds For Sculpture

Callie Lasch, Assistant Manager of Learning Experiences, Grounds For Sculpture

Tiffany Allen, Director of Education and Engagement, Grounds For Sculpture



VEX CONTACT
ERICA VON SCHENK

Delegates' Café Private Dining Room



DESIGNING SENSORY GUIDES FOR LIVE PERFORMANCE

2:20 - 3:20 PM Freedom Classroom

Learn how sensory guides can improve accessibility and visitor experience in performing arts venues. This session shares practical lessons from developing and implementing sensory guides for Broadway touring productions and live performances, including how information is gathered, how guides are structured, and how they support audiences with sensory sensitivities.

PRESENTERS:

Karoline Smith, Accessibility Manager, Pittsburgh Cultural Trust

Takeaways:

- Key elements of an effective sensory guide.
- How to gather sensory information from productions.
- How sensory guides improve accessibility and visitor experience.



VEX CONTACT
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Freedom Classroom



EVENTS

- **Closing Remarks & *Freedom Rising* Performance**

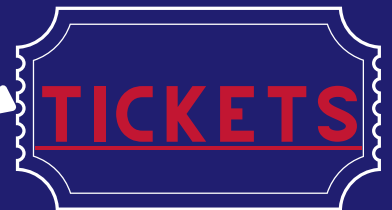
- 3:30 - 4:00 PM - Kimmel Theater
- ***Must be in the theater by 3:30 PM to see the show!***

- **Liberty Bell Center Visit**

- 4:15 PM - Depart from National Constitution Center lobby

- **Visitors Are a Drag After Party**

- 6:00 - 8:30 PM - Mummers Museum
- 1100 S 2nd St, Philadelphia, PA
- Directions



- **After the After Party Karaoke Night**

- 9:00 PM - 700 Club
- 700 N 2nd St, Philadelphia, PA
- Directions



VISITOR EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE



❄️ **A MORE PERFECT UNION**
PHILADELPHIA ❄️

Join us for an evening of fun at the Mummers Museum in South Philly! Your ticket includes:

- Open bar & light bites
- Mummer-themed craft activity
- Full access to the museum
- The Snark Attack - an open mic-like event hosted by some fabulous drag queens in which you get to say all of the things you've always wanted to say to the worst kinds of visitors and one-star reviewers



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TUESDAY OCTOBER 13

- **ROUNDTABLE BREAKFAST**
 - 9:00 – 10:30 AM
 - NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER DELEGATES CAFÉ
 - INCLUDED WITH YOUR CONFERENCE ADMISSION
- **WORKSHOPS** —————→ **TICKETS**
 - 11:00 AM – 3:30 PM
 - LUNCH 12:30 – 2:00 PM
 - NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER
- **HAPPY HOUR**
 - 6:00 – 8:00 PM
 - FRANKLIN SQUARE (DIRECTIONS)



YOU ARE HERE: ON MAPS & BELONGING

More than navigation tools, Maps & Way-finding communicate belonging, trust, and accessibility. This workshop guides attendees on how cultural institutions can design accessible maps and signage that empower visitors, improve autonomy, and enhance the visitor experience. Attendees will learn the elements of accessibility way-finding, learn to evaluate maps to identify gaps, and tactics to improve. BYO Map to work in real time to evaluate and identify areas of success and improvement!

Takeaways:

- Learn the elements of accessibility in map design
- Evaluate maps for accessibility improvements
- Work in real-time to assess and improve your current map

Tuesday, October 13, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
National Constitution Center
F.M. Kirby Auditorium



Dani Rose, Director of Cultural Access, Open Door Arts



Alex Boyle, Director of Programs, Art-Reach



FROM TURNOVER TO TENURE: EMPLOYEE MENTORING

Front-line staff shape every visitor interaction, yet often lack structured development. This session shares how we shifted from incentives to a mentoring program focused on visitor engagement, retention, and cross-department learning. Participants will examine challenges, review adaptable tools, and draft a realistic mentoring outline tailored to their institution's capacity and culture.



Jill Nelson, Manager of Visitor Experience, Amon Carter Museum of American Art

Takeaways:

- A simple, customizable 6–8 month mentoring structure they can adapt for their own front-line or visitor-facing staff.
- Concrete prompts, questionnaires, and meeting topics that link mentoring directly to visitor engagement, confidence, and cross-department learning.
- A realistic action list (stakeholders, barriers, next steps) for piloting or formalizing a mentoring program within their institution's existing constraints.

Tuesday, October 13, 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM
National Constitution Center
Sutherland Learning Center



EXTENDING INTENTIONAL INVITATION ACCESSIBILITY THROUGH DESIGN, MESSAGING, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Creating an accessible and inclusive experience requires intentionality from the start! This workshop will provide a basic overview of the principles of disability access and explore how to ensure accessibility is woven into the design and planning process, across messaging and community outreach, and throughout the onsite visitor experience.



Diane Nutting, Accessibility & Inclusion Consultant

Takeaways:

- Overview of disability access and inclusion philosophy and practice.
- Strategies, resources, and tips for creating accessible and inclusive visitor experiences.
- A “start where you are” action plan for implementing accessibility.

Tuesday, October 13, 2:00 - 3:30 PM
National Constitution Center
F.M. Kirby Auditorium



STAFF ENGAGEMENT: HUMANIZING THE WORKPLACE

Work is inherently exploitative, and it is becoming increasingly important to work against this. In this hands-on workshop, Pat will give some background, share some experiences, and work with you and your fellow attendees on editing assorted workplace communications to create a more human-centered environment. **It is recommended that attendees of this workshop bring a laptop or tablet equipped with access to Google Drive.**



**Pat Wittwer, Vice President,
Visitor Experience Group**

Takeaways:

- Tips for humanizing the work experience in your department
- Tools to help you improve staff relations, morale, and move toward a people-first model.
- A shared document created during the workshop.

Tuesday, October 13, 2:00 - 3:30 PM
National Constitution Center
Sutherland Learning Center

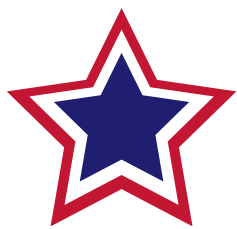


WEDNESDAY

OCTOBER 14

- **TOURS**

- **THE MÜTTER MUSEUM AND EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY**
 - **BOARD BUS AT 8:50 AM AT VEX HOTEL, BUS DEPARTURE AT 9:00AM, BUS RETURNS TO VEX HOTEL AT 1:30PM**
- **PHILADELPHIA ZOO AND BARTRAM'S GARDEN**
 - **BOARD BUS AT 8:20 AM AT VEX HOTEL, BUS DEPARTURE AT 8:30 AM, BUS RETURNS TO VEX HOTEL AT 1:30 PM**
- **MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION, CHRIST CHURCH, BETSY ROSS HOUSE**
 - **9:00 AM DEPARTURE FROM VEX HOTEL AND RETURNS TO VEX HOTEL AT 1:30 PM**



TOUR: THE MÜTTER MUSEUM AND EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY



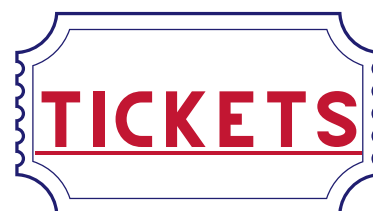
Get a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of two unique Philly cultural attractions: The Mutter Museum and Eastern State Penitentiary. This ticket includes admission to both institutions, a short presentation/tour from staff, and bus transportation to and from the conference hotel. The bus boards at the hotel at 8:50 AM to start the tour and returns at 1:30 PM.



TOUR: THE PHILADELPHIA ZOO & BARTRAM'S GARDEN



Get a behind-the-scenes look at the operations of two distinct outdoor attractions: The Philadelphia Zoo (America's first zoo) and Philly's oldest cultural institution, Bartram's Garden. This ticket includes admission to both institutions, a short presentation/tour from staff, and bus transportation to and from the conference hotel. At the Zoo, groups of 10 will rotate between tours of the Animal Hospital and Commissary, with an optional docent-led tour of the zoo or exploration on your own to follow. The bus boards at the hotel at 8:20 AM to start the tour and returns at 1:30 PM.

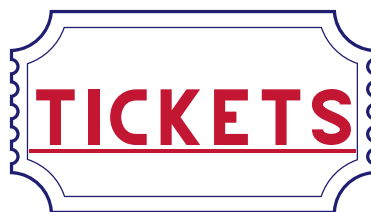




TOUR: OLD CITY INSTITUTIONS

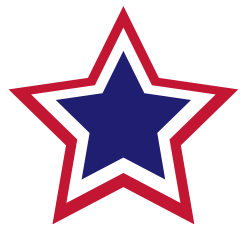


Stroll around Philly's Old City Historic District, making stops at three cultural institutions for a behind-the-scenes look at their operations and time to enjoy each institution. Your ticket includes admission to the Museum of the American Revolution, Christ Church, and the Betsy Ross House. We will also make a quick stop at Little Susie's Coffee & Pie and/or the Franklin Fountain for a snack to fuel us as we stroll from location to location. The tour departs at 9:00 AM and will return at 1:30 PM.





SAVE THE ACADEMY OF NATURAL SCIENCES



We are deeply disappointed in Drexel University's decision to close the Academy of Natural Sciences. The Academy has been a big part of our journey, from hosting our very first conference (then the Greater Philadelphia Visitor Services Symposium) to the event pictured here from the 2019 conference. This is a tremendous loss for the city of Philadelphia and for the science community as a whole and a devastating blow to the dedicated, brilliant museum workers who bring that place to life each day.

Please visit save-the-academy.org to learn more about efforts to save the museum, allow continued public access to this amazing institution, and prevent Drexel from selling the historic building that houses the museum.





WORKING TOGETHER

Big changes are in store for the **2027 Visitor Experience Conference**! We are thrilled to be partnering with the **Museum Store Association** to present our conference alongside theirs in **Albuquerque** this spring. We're excited to bring VEX to the Southwest and enjoy a springtime conference experience while also partnering with one of our favorite organizations. Join VEX and MSA this **May in New Mexico** for a week of museum conferences, field trips, and other fun and exciting events as we celebrate **working together**!



WORKING TOGETHER 2027 VISITOR EXPERIENCE CONFERENCE ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



Collaboration is at the heart of every cultural and tourist attraction. As the Visitor Experience Group teams up with the Museum Store Association, we are putting collaboration front and center at our 2027 conference.

We invite you to explore the big questions with us: How do cross-departmental teams drive your mission? How do you engage community partners who share your values? And how can new alliances shape your strategic plan?

Join us in Albuquerque this May as we connect with collaborators—both old and new—to explore how we can reach our full potential, together.

[SESSION PROPOSAL GUIDE](#)

[SUBMIT A SESSION PROPOSAL](#)

JOIN OUR TEAM

Ready to get involved with the Visitor Experience Group (VEX)?

The path to joining our team of volunteers usually begins by attending our annual conference or other events. From there, you might be asked to become a VEX Ambassador, serving as a regional representative on our Audience Engagement team. We then recruit for our Communications, Events & Operations, and Programming teams from this pool of Ambassadors and frequent attendees. We select board members from all these groups to ensure our leadership stays relevant and diverse.

Email Pat to get involved!



WORKING TOGETHER
20 VISITOR
27 EXPERIENCE
CONFERENCE
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



MAR DIXON TRAVEL SCHOLARSHIP

The Mar Dixon Travel Scholarship was established in 2026 in memory of 2019 Visitor Experience Conference Keynote Speaker Mar Dixon, who passed away in 2024. In partnership with Mar's family, the Visitor Experience Group will select one recipient each year to receive \$1000 towards their travel, lodging, and meals during their time at the Visitor Experience Conference. The scholarship will also include free admission to one evening event and one workshop.

