

Final Report - COVID-19 Local History Impact Survey

COVID-19 Local History Impact Survey

May 12, 2020 10:08 AM MDT

Introduction



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

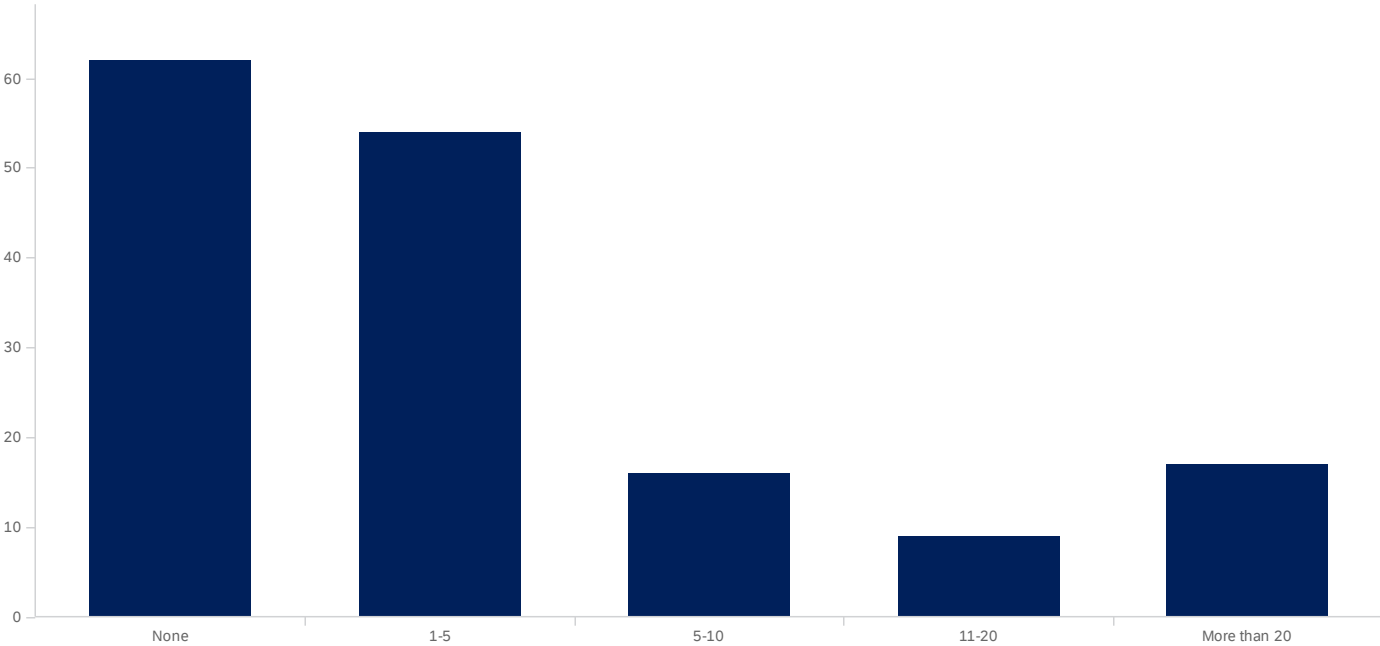


Wisconsin
Federation
of Museums

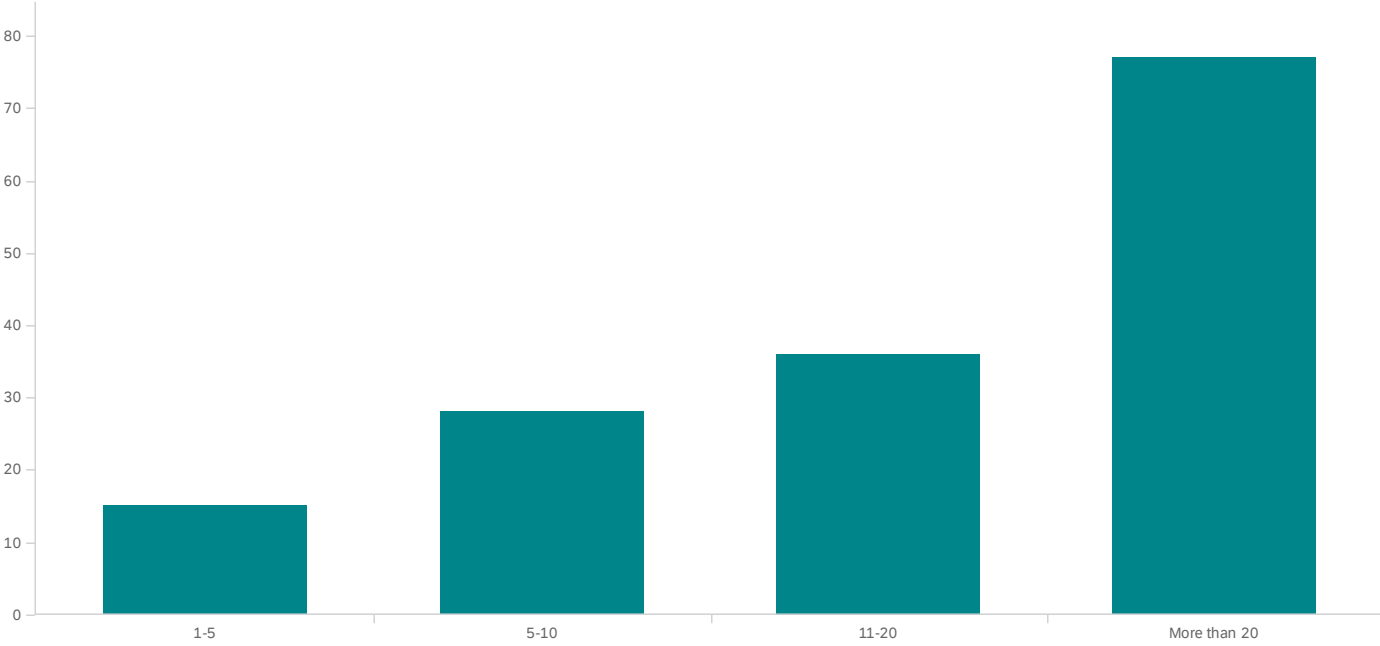
From March 31 through April 15, 2020, the Wisconsin Historical Society and Wisconsin Federation of Museums partnered to survey their affiliates and members about the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Wisconsin's museums, historical societies, and collecting organizations. Individual responses have been kept anonymous, but aggregated and summarized responses may be found in this report. For more information on this survey, please contact Janet Seymour at the Wisconsin Historical Society at janet.seymour@wisconsinhistory.org or Greg Vadney at the Wisconsin Federation of Museums at wfmresident@wisconsinmuseums.org.

Number of Staff & Volunteers

Number of Paid Staff

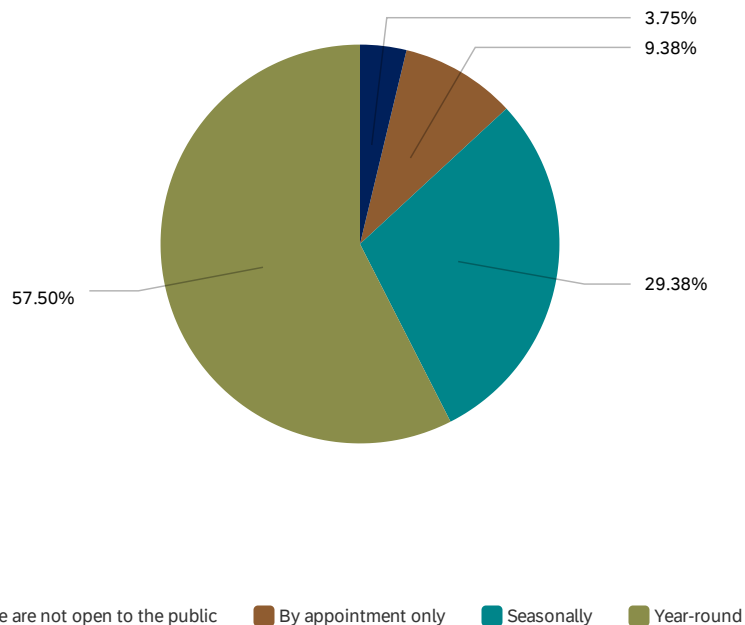


Number of Volunteers

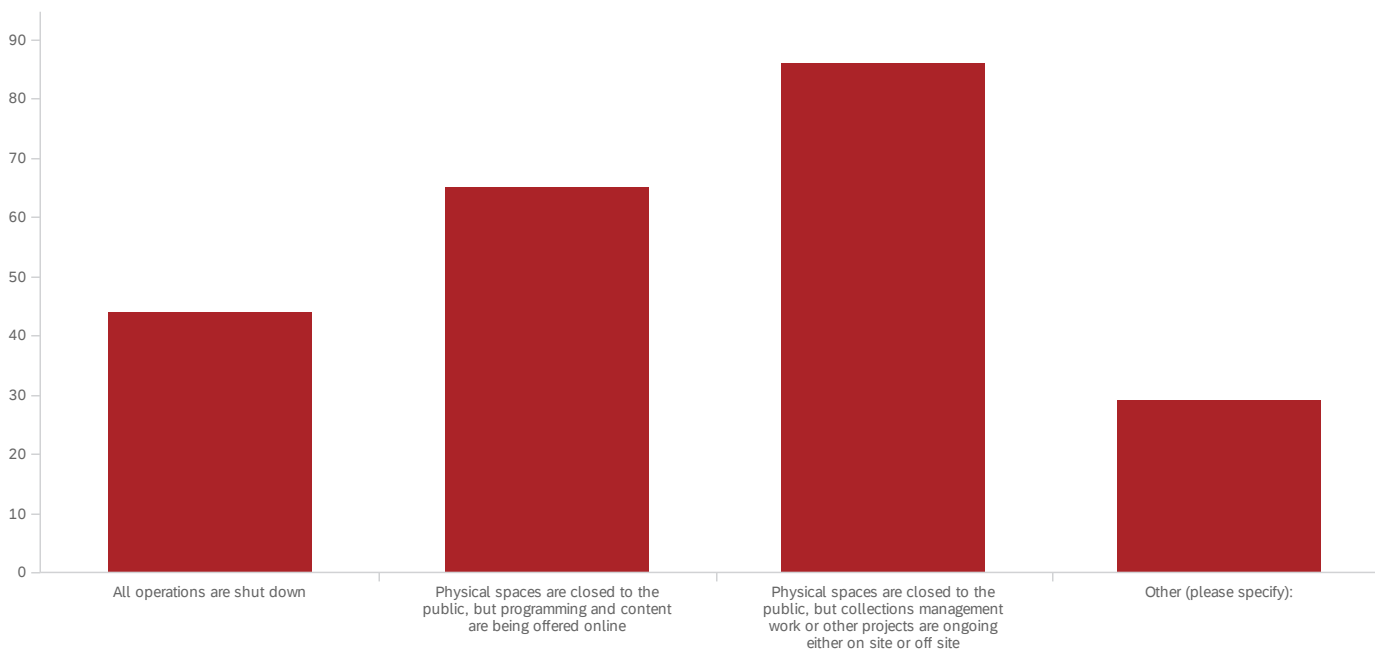


Opening Times & Current Status

When is your organization open to the public?



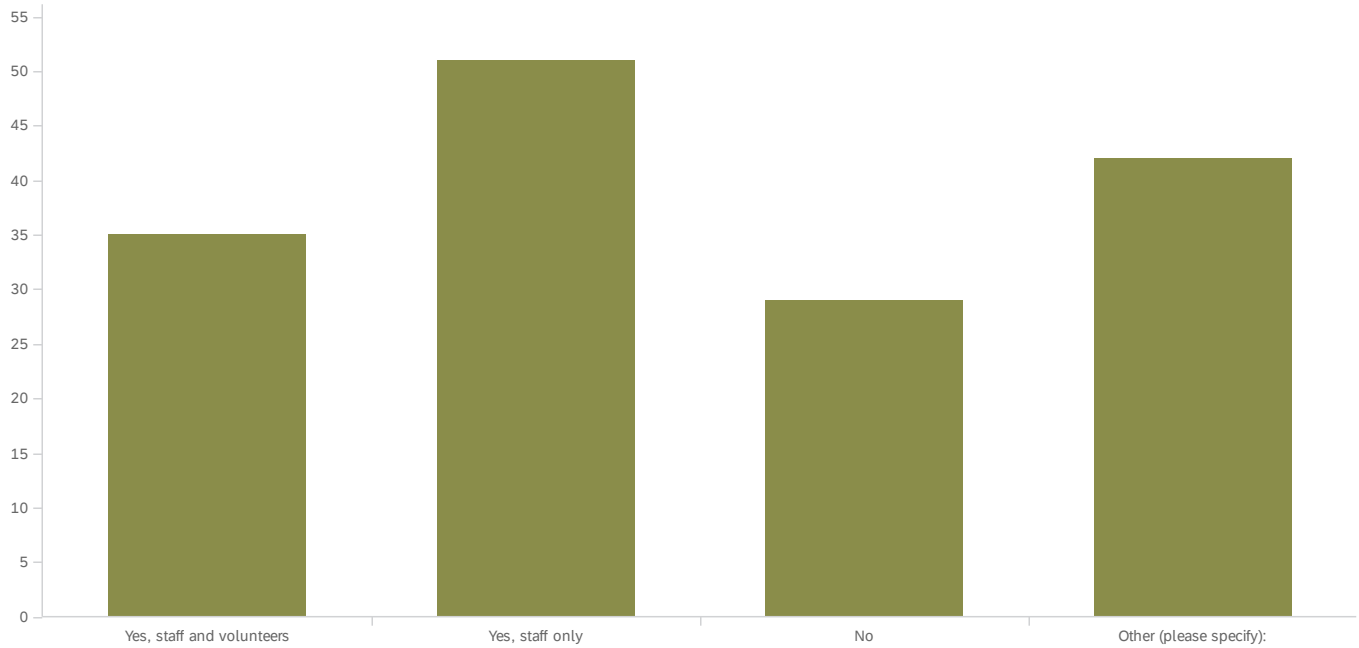
What is the current status of your organization in relation to Governor Evers's March 24th "Safer at Home" executive order directing places of public amusement and activity to close to the public?



Roughly 13 percent of respondents selected "Other" as at least one of their responses to this question. Most other these respondents used this field to clarify the types of programming and work continuing through the shutdown, including performing administrative and financial tasks, maintaining or updating websites, increasing social media engagement, responding to inquiries, maintaining or updating physical spaces, and planning reopening strategies. Physical spaces were closed to the public and to many staff and volunteers. Some seasonal organizations were normally closed during this time and were not impacted by the shutdown.

Remote Work

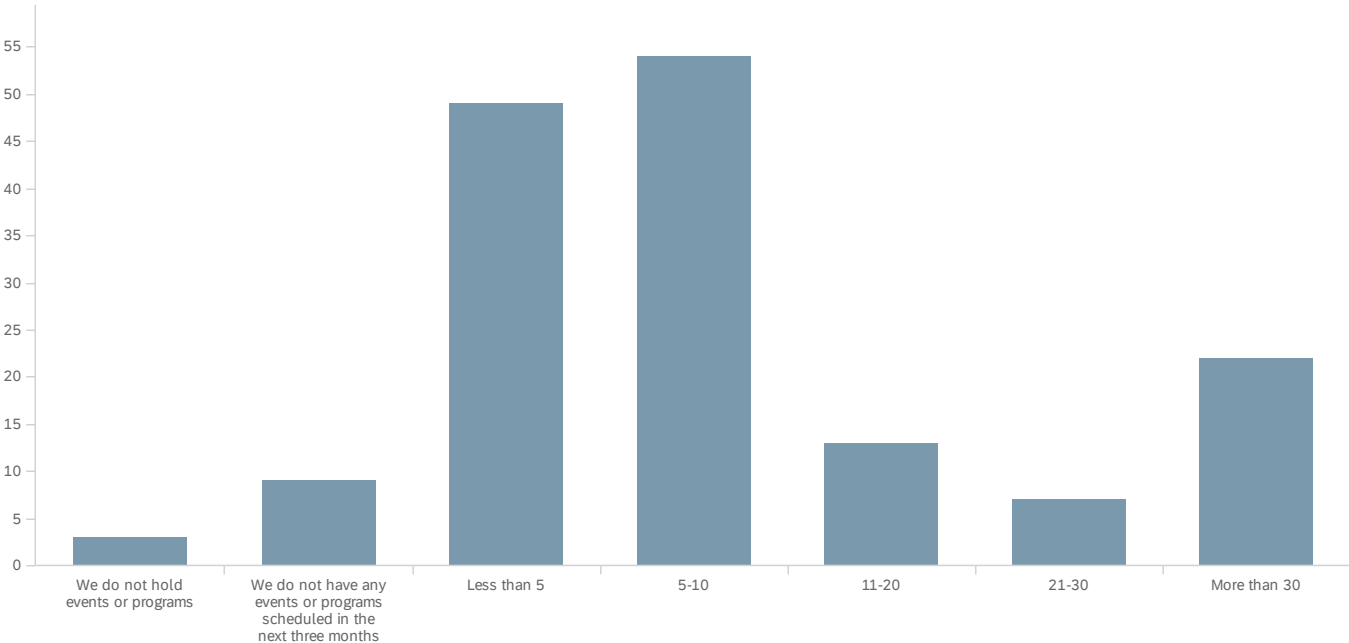
Are staff or volunteers able to work remotely?



Slightly more than one-quarter of respondents selected “Other” for their response to this question. Of those responses, the vast majority clarified that only a subset of staff or volunteers were able to work remotely. Most commonly, directors, administrative staff, and some full-time staff were able to work remotely, while other full- or part-time staff and volunteers were less likely to be able to perform remote work. In some cases, board members were able to continue remote work. Several respondents answered that digital work, like responding to inquiries, posting photos, videos, and other updates, and distributing newsletters, could continue through the shutdown.

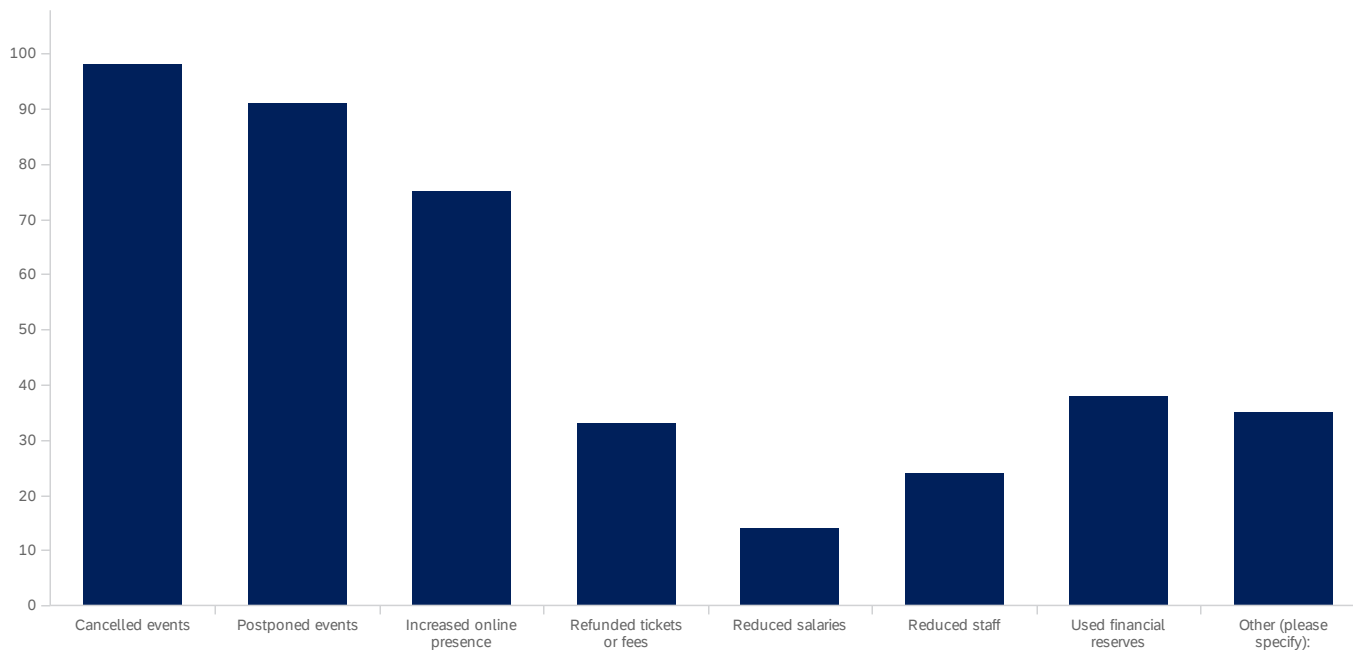
Event Cancellations

How many events, programs, contracts, etc. have you had to cancel or do you anticipate having to cancel or postpone in the next three months?



Addressing Financial Instability - Steps Taken

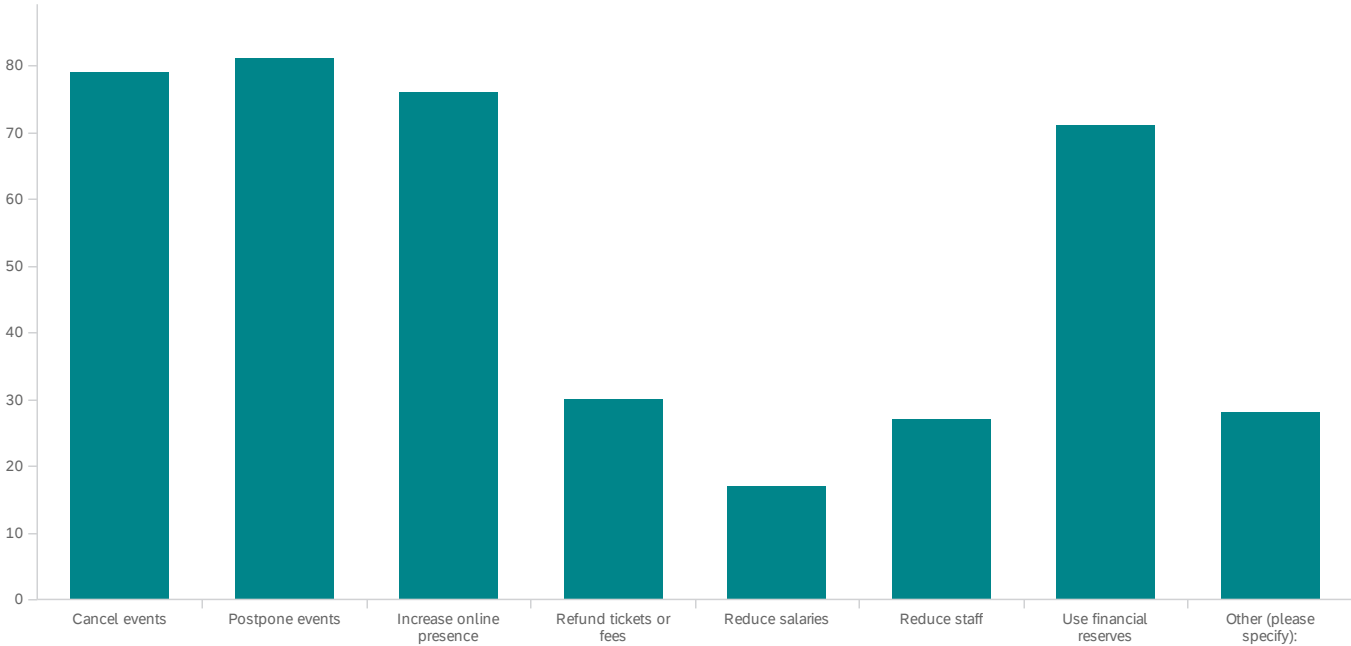
What steps have you already taken to address potential financial instability caused by the pandemic?



Around 9 percent of respondents selected “Other” as at least one of their responses to this question. Financially, several organizations indicated they would be applying for relief funds or were planning fundraising drives centered around the pandemic to make up for shortfalls. Respondents indicated they were financially stable for the time being but could face furloughs, hiring freezes, and expenditure freezes depending on the length of the shutdown. Seasonal organizations indicated they were not yet impacted by the pandemic but would be reassessing operations later in the year. Some organizations were delaying or cancelling special projects or exhibitions that would have been resource-intensive.

Addressing Financial Instability - Steps Anticipated

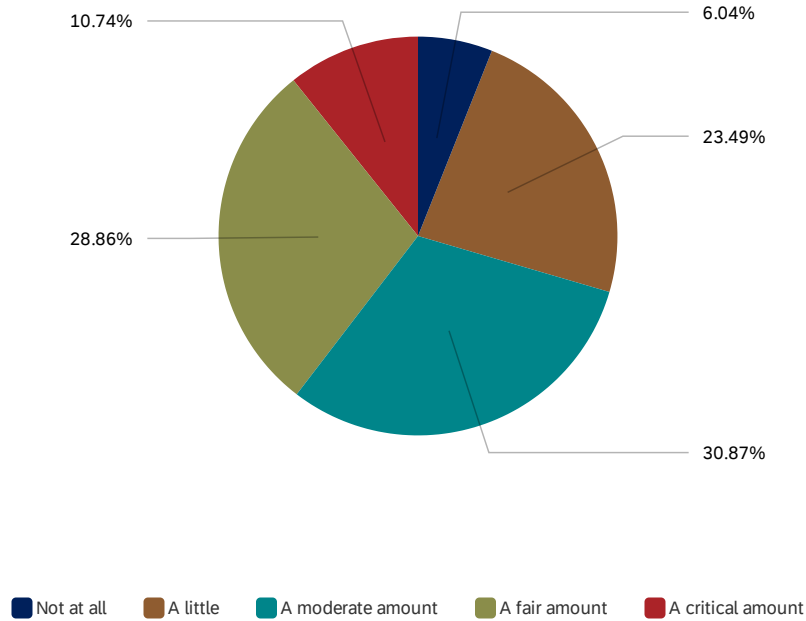
What steps will you likely take to address potential financial instability caused by the pandemic?



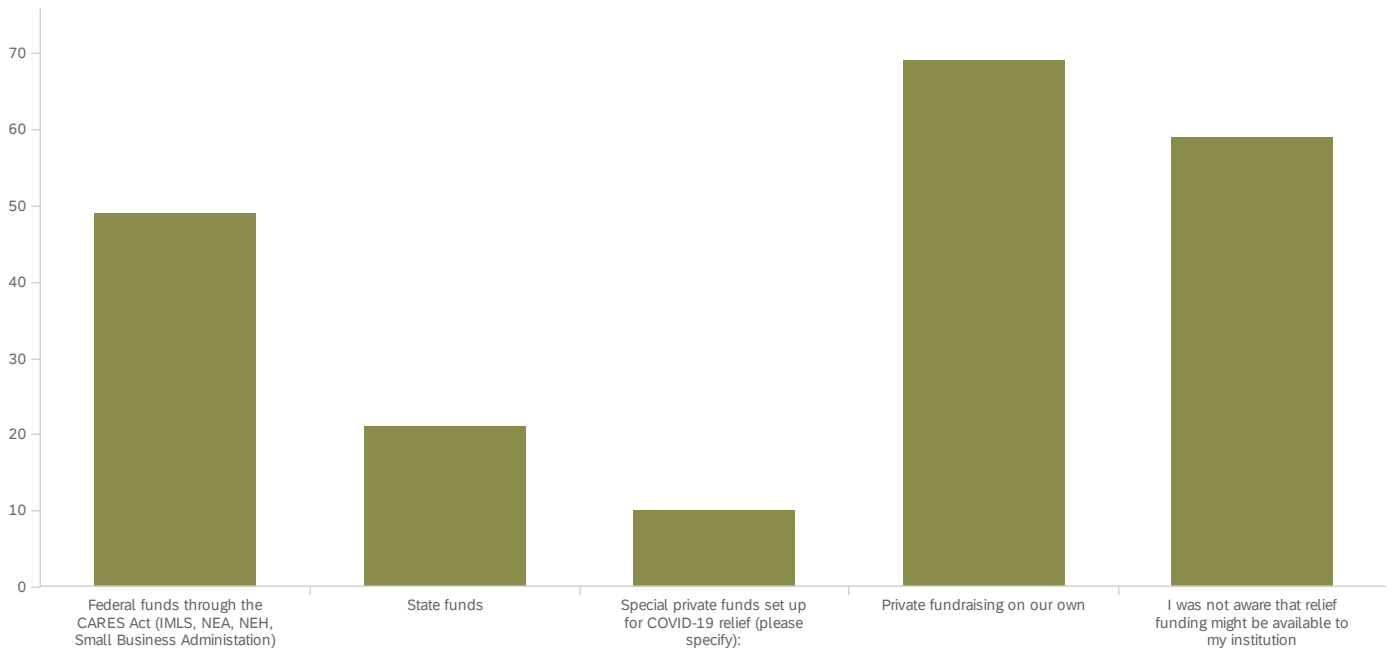
Fewer respondents, only around 7 percent, selected “Other” as at least one of their responses to this question. Generally, the uncertainty around the length of the shutdown and potential resurgences of the pandemic made this question difficult to answer for some organizations. In almost all cases, organizations that selected “Other” anticipated exploring more financial relief options or changing fee structures to account for future instability. Some organizations indicated they were highly dependent on admissions revenue and would see greater instability if closures persist through the summer.

Financial Impact & Relief Funding

How much do you anticipate the pandemic will affect your overall financial stability?



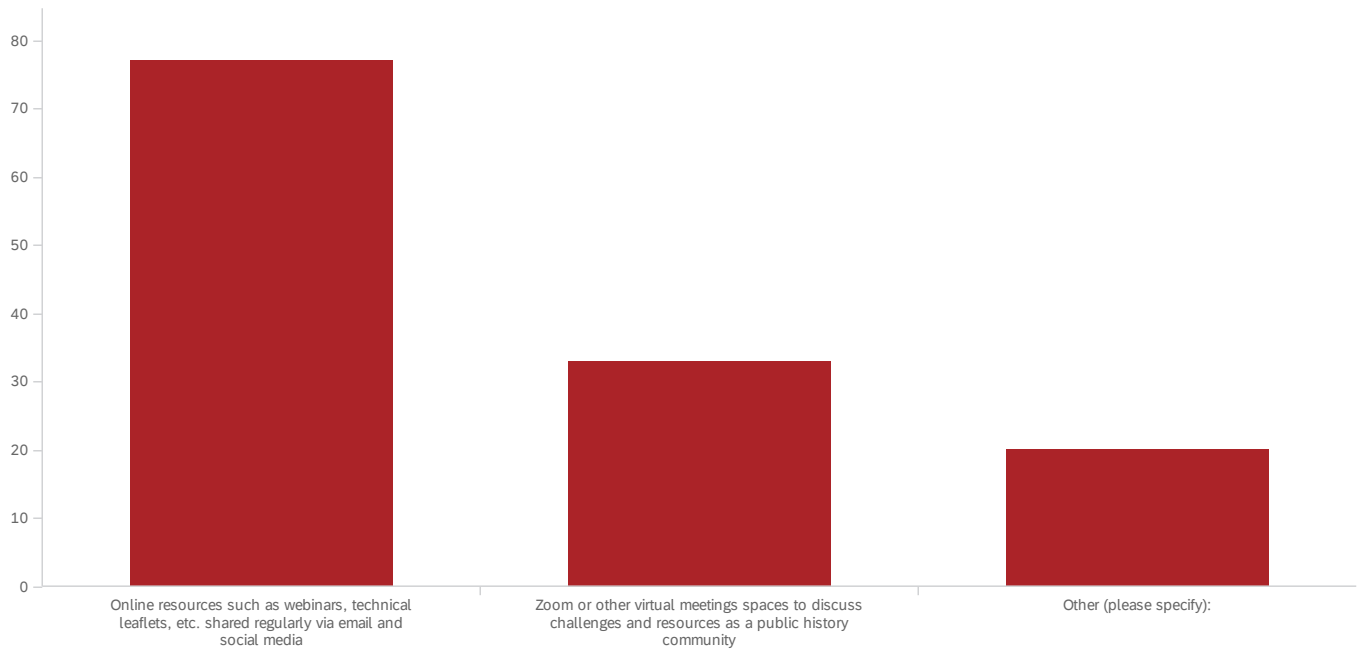
How is your institution planning to apply for relief funding?



Less than 5 percent of respondents identified special private funds as a source for relief funding. Those that did indicated they would use foundation grants to cover financial shortfalls.

Resource Types

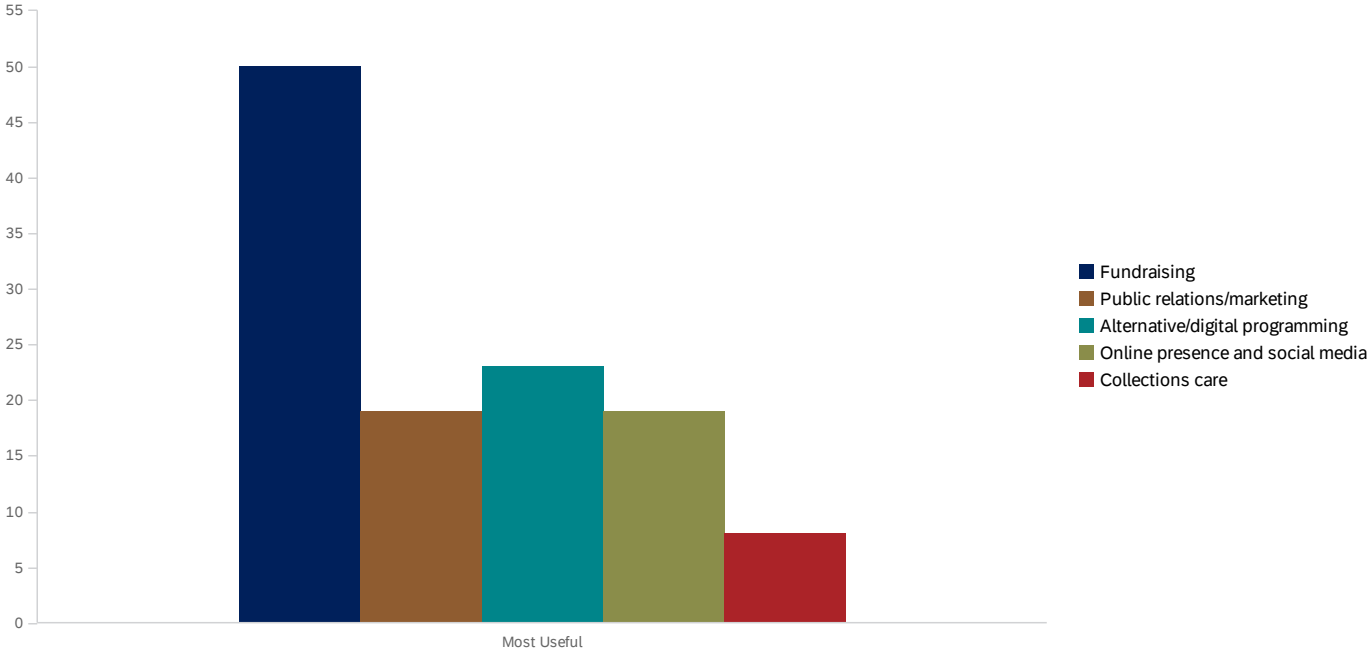
What resources would be most useful to staff and volunteers over the next few months?



Fifteen percent of respondents to this question selected “Other” to request resources in addition to those specifically mentioned in the other answer choices. Those who selected this answer indicated they would benefit most from monetary support or specific instructions on how to apply for relief funding from the various avenues now available; advice on how to conduct virtual meetings and events, especially for those less comfortable with technology; and advice or a discussion forum on reopening protocols, particularly those surrounding social distancing and cleaning. One respondent noted that they were somewhat overwhelmed by the deluge of resources available now and would benefit more from resources specific to recovery released later.

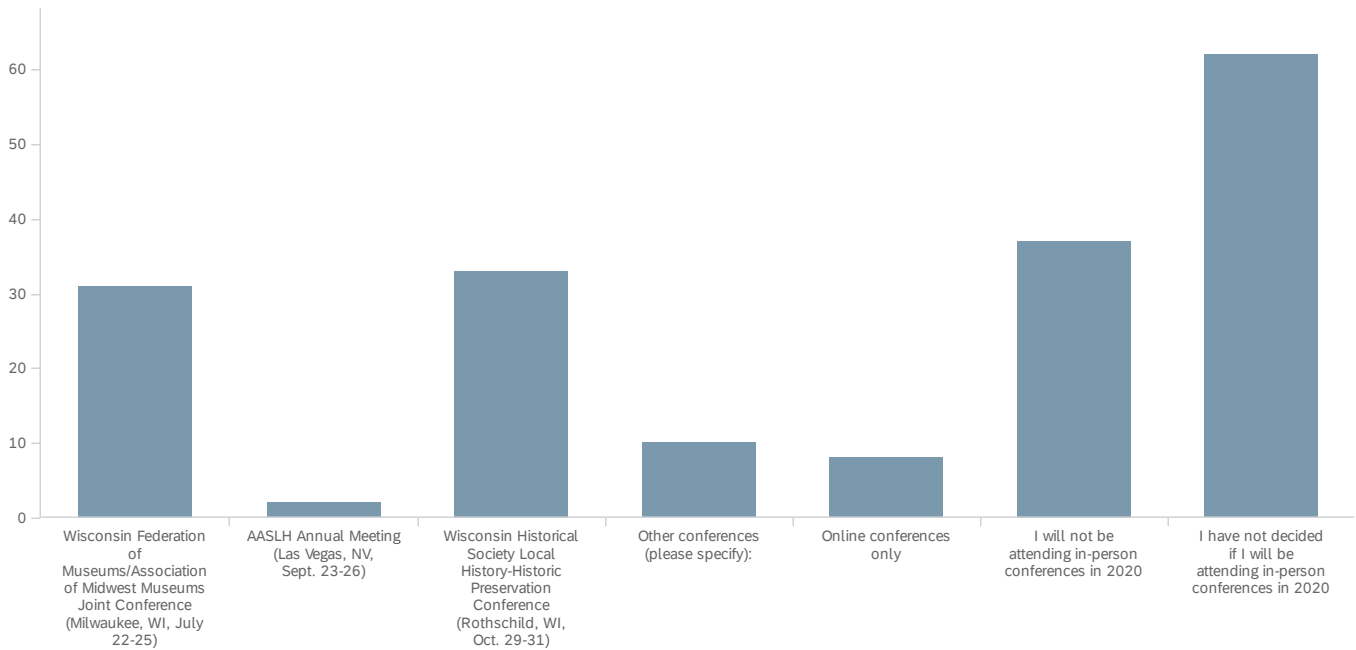
Resource Topics

What resource topics would be most useful to you to address challenges caused by the pandemic?



2020 In-Person Conferences

What in-person conferences are you currently planning to attend later in 2020?



Around 5 percent of respondents indicated they were planning to attend conferences other than those listed. These included the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism, Wisconsin State Genealogical Society Fall Seminar, Museum Store Association Conference, Smithsonian Affiliations National Conference, Midwest Archaeological Conference, Wisconsin Technology Council Conference, National Philanthropy Day, and several regional local history conferences.

End of Report