Long Night of Museums

The Long Night of Museums is an event format in which multiple institutions extend their opening hours and offer a joint programme. Visitors can explore different venues, visit exhibitions, join guided tours, and engage in conversations with experts and local stakeholders.
In participatory processes, this concept is adapted to make projects, planning initiatives, places, or future visions tangible and accessible. Different stations provide information, present ideas, and encourage dialogue. Instead of a traditional information event, the format creates an open and engaging experience that invites people to discover, participate, and exchange ideas.

Participation Depth	Inform, Participate
Project Phase	Onboarding
Goals	Understanding & Gathering Perspectives
Format	Analogue
Duration	1 - 3 Hours
Target Group	Directly Affected, Interested Public, Hard-to-Reach Groups, Organised Actors
Group Size	As Many as Possible
Characteristics	Simple, Creative

GOAL OF THE METHOD

The Long Night of Museums makes projects, places, and future-oriented topics accessible to a broad audience.

By combining information, experience, and personal interaction, the format provides an approachable way to communicate complex issues. At the same time, it offers opportunities to collect visitors' questions, feedback, and initial ideas.

PROCEDURE

Preparation

1. Define the Objective and Theme
Determine the topics to be presented and the target groups to be reached.

Possible themes include:

- urban development
- mobility
- climate adaptation
- cultural development
- neighbourhood development
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future visions for a place

2. Select Participating Venues and Partners
Identify the participating locations and organisations.

Possible venues include:

- museums
- cultural or community centres
- public institutions
- local associations
- project sites
- vacant buildings

A diverse selection of venues creates a richer and more engaging event.

3. Develop the Programme
Design an appropriate format for each venue.

Possible activities include:

- guided tours
- short presentations
- film screenings
- exhibitions
- model presentations
- interactive stations
- workshops
- discussion areas

Aim for a balanced mix of information and interaction.

4. Plan Visitor Navigation
Since visitors often move between several locations, provide clear orientation.

Possible tools include:

- maps
- programme brochures
- event website
- mobile app
- signage

Routes between venues should be easy to follow and accessible.

5. Communication and Public Outreach
Promote the event well in advance.

Suitable communication channels include:

- local newspapers
- municipal websites
- social media
- newsletters
- community organisations
- schools and educational institutions

Particular effort should be made to reach people who have had little previous engagement with the topic.

Execution

1. Opening the Event
Begin by introducing:

- the purpose of the event
- the overall programme
- participating venues
- opportunities for participation
- documentation and feedback options

2. Explore the Venues
Visitors move independently between the different locations.

At each station, projects, ideas, or future visions can be presented through exhibitions, demonstrations, or interactive activities.

Experts, project leaders, and local stakeholders should be available to answer questions and engage in conversations.

3. Encourage Dialogue
Informal conversations are a central element of the format.

Suitable methods include:

- moderated discussion areas
- open Q&A sessions
- feedback walls
- comment cards
- digital participation tools

Helpful guiding questions include:

- What opportunities do you see?
- What challenges do you identify?
- What is currently missing?
- Which ideas should be explored further?

4. Collect Feedback
Throughout the event, document visitors' opinions, questions, and suggestions.

Possible methods include:

- written notes
- feedback cards
- digital comments
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interviews

- audio or video recordings

5. Closing Session
At the end of the event, key impressions and findings can be brought together.

Depending on the format, this may take place:

- in a plenary session,
- during a closing discussion,
- or through a public summary of the event.

Evaluation

1. Prepare the Documentation
Document the event using appropriate formats, such as:

- photo documentation
- exhibition documentation
- summary report
- compilation of visitor feedback
- video recordings

2. Analyse the Results
Organise and review all collected feedback.

Particular attention should be given to:

- frequently mentioned topics
- suggestions for improvement
- open questions
- new ideas and perspectives

3. Share the Results
Publish the main findings so participants can see:

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which ideas were collected,

- how feedback has been considered,
- and how the results will be used in the future.

Transparent communication strengthens trust in the participation process.

4. Prepare Further Participation
The event often generates new questions and ideas.

These can be explored further through additional participation formats, workshops, or dialogue events.

Source: Bujdosó, A. (Ed.) (2019): *Social Design Cookbook: Recipes for Social Cooperation*. Budapest: Kitchen Budapest.

WHEN USEFUL?

- presenting projects or plans to the public.
- topics can be experienced through exhibitions, models, or installations.
- engaging new target groups.
- connecting different organisations and stakeholders.
- launching or presenting an interim stage of a participation process.
- reaching a large audience through a low-threshold format.

WHEN NOT USEFUL?

- developing concrete measures or action plans.
- intensive workshops or in-depth discussions are required.
- formal decisions need to be made.
- only a very small target group is involved.
- highly specialised technical information is the primary focus.

TIPS

- Combine informative content with engaging experiences.
- Offer a variety of formats to appeal to different target groups.
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Short, easy-to-understand presentations are generally more effective than lengthy technical lectures.

- Ensure routes between venues are simple, clearly signposted, and accessible.
- Make feedback opportunities visible and easy to use.
- Consider using venues beyond traditional cultural institutions.
- Create a welcoming atmosphere that encourages conversation and participation.

NOT SUITABLE FOR

- concrete decisions need to be prepared.
- detailed planning work must be carried out collaboratively.
- confidential or sensitive topics are involved.
- intensive discussion among all participants is required.
- organisational and coordination resources are limited.

View online: https://methoden.urbankit.de/en/methods/lange-nacht-der-museen