

California Academy of Sciences

Academy for All





Introduction

The California Academy of Sciences is committed to opening its doors to everyone in the Bay Area, especially children, so they can enjoy the economic and civic benefits of scientific literacy. As a leading cultural institution and model citizen of our community, lowering the barriers to Academy visits – including cost, access, and culture – is among our highest priorities. The *Academy for All* initiative already serves nearly 225,000 children and their families each year. We are continuing to broaden its reach through several initiatives:

- » **Free Admission Programs.** *Neighborhood Free Weekends* (admission by SF zip code), *Quarterly Free Sundays* (admission for all), and *Free Admission Tickets* (distributed to low-income families by local partners) draw thousands of visitors who mirror the Bay Area's diverse demography.
- » **School and Youth Field Trips.** More than 155,000 students and young people from across the Bay Area visit the Academy on free or subsidized trips. Visitors gain an invaluable learning experience outside the classroom, engaging face-to-face with natural wonders, authentic science, and environmental awareness.
- » **Teen Science Programs.** *Teen Advocates for Science Communication* and *Tech Teens* enable youth to create innovative public education experiences in the museum and with digital media. Our *Careers in Science* internship program mentors underserved high school students in preparation for STEM career paths. Our annual *Teen Science Night*, organized by these youth, welcomes nearly 2,000 teens annually, and is the largest such event in the nation.
- » **Workforce Inclusivity.** With the help of local partners, we actively recruit individuals traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields with enthusiasm to gain new skills. These employees are important members of our community, and they have a positive impact on both our staff and our core business.

The Need

The San Francisco Bay Area is at the center of a modern-day Gold Rush, mining diverse fields of new technology. But the benefits of this explosion of innovation and wealth creation are not available to all. In fact, they have produced significant inequities in housing, jobs, and education. San Francisco Mayor, Ed Lee, has highlighted the city's crisis of inequality and has called for a new "shared prosperity."

The opportunity gap in education is especially important to address. The Bay Area's economy, more than any other, depends heavily on excellence in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) fields. But over the last decade, California's students have lagged behind national standards in these areas, often ranking at the bottom of national surveys. As a community, we must do better, by providing STEM education opportunities to everyone in our region.

The Academy's Response

The California Academy of Sciences is committed to opening its doors widely, especially to Bay Area children, so that they can all benefit from world-class science education opportunities, and the enormous economic and civic advantages those opportunities afford. Museums generally, and the Academy in particular, are fantastic sources of informal science learning opportunities; numerous studies point to the transformative impact of museums in education.

We believe we can help transform the scientific literacy of children in the Bay Area. But first, they must have access to the Academy.

Lowering the barriers to entry—whether cost, access, language, or culture—is a first step in achieving an *Academy for All*. Our long-term goal is to ensure that every child in the Bay Area has unencumbered access to science learning experiences at the Academy—through visits, field trips, immersive programs, and ongoing educational engagement activities. Internally, we prioritize building a diverse workforce that includes individuals typically underrepresented in STEM fields.

Enabling this access is positive for our educational system, local economy, and civic landscape. It is simply the right thing to do as a leading cultural institution and as a good citizen of our community.





The Academy cannot solve all of our region's economic and educational problems alone. But we can be part of the solution. This initiative includes programs that serve nearly 225,000 children and their families each year through free and low-cost programs.

These programs are only a start. To truly facilitate access for all Bay Area residents, we must offer families and school groups a variety of options that address different cultural and logistical needs.

1. Free Admission Programs

Lowering the cost barrier is an important step towards making the Academy accessible for everyone. Our free admission programs attract over 65,000 visitors per year, including individuals, couples, and multi-generational families. Each visitor can enjoy—free of charge—everything the Academy offers, including exhibits, planetarium shows, and daily programs.

We offer several kinds of free admission opportunities:

San Francisco *Neighborhood Free Weekends* provide free admission for San Francisco residents several times a year, based on a rotating schedule for each zip code. *Quarterly Free Sundays* provide free admission opportunities for all visitors. These accessibility programs expand the economic, ethnic, and age diversity of Academy visitors, drawing people from all over the Bay Area, as demonstrated by visitor exit surveys.

We also offer *Free Admission tickets* to low-income families through Community Access Ticket Services (CATS), a partnership with social service agencies in the Bay Area. CATS ensures qualified low-income families can attend the Academy at any time.

Furthermore, we offer *Family Membership passes*, which can be checked out on loan, through 72 different neighborhood libraries in San Francisco and across the Bay Area.

While the Academy forgoes significant revenue each year by offering these programs, the benefits of opening our doors to children and families who might not be able to visit otherwise are incalculable.

We seek visionary donors to help support and grow these programs, ensuring that every child in the Bay Area can have a life-changing experience at the Academy, with world-class opportunities to learn about science and the natural world.

2. School and Youth Field Trips

We all remember the museums we visited when we were young. Museum field trips make a big difference to children.

The Academy's stimulating environment greatly enriches the educational experience for students and teachers who have little time or resources for science in their regular school schedule. On a daily basis, our aquarium, planetarium, public floor, and gardens are filled with pre-K-12 students from schools, camps, home schools, and youth groups. As trusted messengers serving the culturally rich Bay Area, our diverse and highly trained public educators, guest services staff, bilingual interpreters, and interns foster critical science learning experiences, all aligned with Next Generation Science Standards.



A day at the Academy provides exposure to deep educational content—available in English, Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese—that is transformative and often life changing. Multilingual teaching materials are available free for teachers, supporting pre-, during, and post-field trip experiences.

We host thousands of school and youth field trips at the Academy, currently serving more than 155,000 students annually. All San Francisco groups—whether from public, private, or parochial schools—receive free

admission to the Academy. Other Bay Area schools, including high-need districts in Oakland and East Palo Alto, as well as other youth groups, receive highly discounted admission (roughly one-quarter of full admission price). In the coming years, we will expand the program in other high-need areas, aiming to serve more than 200,000 students per year.

This program is a hallmark of our commitment to the Bay Area, and we welcome donors to help us grow this important service to the community. Enhancements to this program will consider transportation to enable additional field trips from outside of San Francisco.

3. Teen Science Programs

The high school years are crucial for developing skills for success in higher education and the workforce. To address this need, we offer enrichment programs to empower youth, expose them to new knowledge, and inspire them with powerful role models in science.

Our youth programs cast a wide net, inviting a diverse group of young people to learn, create, and share scientific knowledge. These programs include *Teen Advocates for Science Communication (TASC)*, for youth in grades 8-12 who create performing arts-inspired programs for our visitors; the *Tech Teens* program, which equips youth to tell science stories through digital media; and *Teen Science Night*, when the Academy welcomes over 1,700 teenagers from 200+ high schools for a free night of youth-created science. This event is the largest event of its kind in the nation.

Our *Careers in Science* program serves highly motivated teenagers who aspire to a career in science. Each year, it actively engages about 50 talented high school students from groups traditionally underrepresented in science. In contrast to our wide-access programs, this year-round program apprentices youth with our scientists, aquarium biologists, and



educators for 3-4 years (up to 600 hours), as paid interns. The Academy has refined this program for 20 years and has tracked the progress of its graduates: the overwhelming majority attend four-year universities and many pursue STEM fields.

4. Workforce Inclusivity

In addition to welcoming a diverse audience through our front door, the Academy is committed to inclusion and diversity in our workforce.

We are a leader in the community in employment of individuals with developmental and other disabilities.



Our partnership with the ARC of San Francisco matches us with a range of adults with disabilities who gain valuable work experience and build professional skills at the Academy.

We work closely with Sunset Youth Services and Larkin Street Youth Services to provide work opportunities to at-risk young adults eager to develop professional skills. Adding to the diversity of our workforce, we also work with custodial vendors that provide job training and support to recently arrived immigrants on staff.

In addition to being a positive addition to the Academy culture, these employees benefit our business. With their help on the public floor, our outstanding guest satisfaction ratings continue to increase each quarter.

We plan to continue growing the diversity of our workforce by committing additional resources to recruit and mentor these groups.

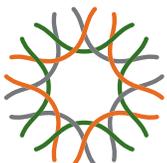


Summary

The California Academy of Sciences aims to open its doors to all Bay Area residents, especially its children, so they can realize the civic and economic benefits of improved scientific literacy. We believe that lowering the barriers to entry and exposing students to STEM fields enables them to pursue broader academic and professional goals, contributing to the rich intellectual life and economy of the Bay Area.

The value of these programs, including focused outreach to ensure they reach their intended audiences, is a multi-million dollar investment that the Academy largely subsidizes. Our goal is to substantially underwrite the current program costs with philanthropic support and grow their capacity, with a particular focus on children.

We are grateful to our lead partners who support this initiative and we invite other visionary donors to join us in creating an *Academy for All* – so that all Bay Area residents can explore, explain, and sustain life on Earth.



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The California Academy of Sciences is a renowned scientific and educational institution dedicated to exploring, explaining, and sustaining life on Earth. Based in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, it is home to a world-class aquarium, planetarium, and natural history museum, as well as innovative programs in scientific research and education—all under one living roof.
www.calacademy.org