

Virginia Museum of Fine Arts  
HB 110 Report  
September 19, 2006

1. To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If the agency can provide data that compares such numbers to numbers of senior citizens served in the past, please do so. If the agency lacks specific information about the numbers of senior citizens it serves, but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer senior citizens than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts enjoys a long tradition of serving senior citizens, who constitute a large component of our membership, volunteer base, and visitorship. While the institution is not currently capturing birth date information on its database, the following data provides the current number of senior level memberships as compared with other VMFA membership categories.

Total Membership - 10,424

Senior level memberships - 3,489 (roughly 1/3 or 34%)

Canvas memberships (ages 35-55) - 99 (roughly 1%)

Friends of Art memberships (young professionals support group)- 229 (roughly 2%)

Student memberships - 186 (roughly 2%)

2. Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency's capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?

VMFA is open to people of all ages and backgrounds; its permanent collection galleries of world art are free of charge as is its exemplary arts research library. In addition to the permanent collections, library, and other visitor amenities such as the restaurant and gift shop, senior citizens enjoy abundant educational activities at the VMFA. These include—but are not limited to—special exhibitions, lectures, classes, workshops, studio art programs, symposia, performing arts events, gallery tours, film series, travel programs, and more. In addition, there are volunteer opportunities that attract many senior citizens, providing them with the chance to work with museum professionals, serve VMFA visitors, and teach school children of all ages who come to visit the museum. Members of VMFA's volunteer docent program (approximately 2/3 of whom are senior citizens) receive training in art history comparable to college instruction free of charge. In turn, they translate this education into lively and informative gallery experiences and tours for visitors of all ages to the museum. Docent volunteers also visit metropolitan Richmond elementary schools to teach students SOL-based lessons using VMFA's art as its educational springboard. Many of VMFA's educational offerings take place throughout the Commonwealth, thereby offering senior citizens across the state opportunities to participate in a variety of programs in the arts: exhibitions, lectures, performing arts events, and artist workshops. For example, this past fiscal year, 2005-06, senior centers booked some 330 VMFA statewide media resources (consisting of traveling exhibitions, videos, and films) that served approximately 20,130 participants.

With regard to challenges, currently VMFA is undergoing construction and parking is temporarily limited (until December 2006); this has been challenging for some of our older visitors. However, the museum has been diligent in providing handicapped access and nearby parking spaces for both the senior public and museum volunteers. With the completion of the parking deck in December 2006, the situation will be remedied.

3. Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education; Public Safety; Recreation; Financial Security (including Housing); and Transportation.

VMFA educational programs and volunteer opportunities are available and accessible to senior citizens who take advantage of them on an ongoing basis (please see 2., above. These offerings do not, of course, preclude younger citizens, resulting in a lively intergenerational mix that benefits all participants. In addition, group visit packages (featuring guided tours, luncheon, shopping, and/or tea) are offered to approximately 100 regional and metropolitan retirement communities.

4. Identify the extent to which your agency provides “consumer-oriented” publications and websites online that are designed to be “senior-friendly.” If the information you currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.

VMFA publishes outstanding books on its rich permanent collections—from scholarly subjects to those of popular interest. In addition, VMFA is re-designing its Web site to comply with state-mandated accessibility standards. This includes compliance with ADA Section 508 and W3C minimum accessibility standards.

Among the standards with which to comply are:

- use of alternative text to describe images
- providing text equivalent of audio presentations
- providing closed-captioning for videos
- type size will be percentage-based rather than fixed, so that Web users can set the type size in their browsers
- there will be sufficient contrast between text and background
- content headers will use a hierarchy <H1>, <H2>, <H3>, etc.
- where inline frames are used for navigation links, frame titles and alternative text are used to allow screen readers to identify and follow the links
- when tables are used for page layout, a table summary will identify the table. The table will be used in this manner only if it makes sense when read in a linear fashion
- data tables will be labeled to allow logical relationship between data elements
- if a new browser window opens up, as with a pop-up, the user will be warned with a text notice.

5. Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia’s population.

VMFA has a solid history of support for and by senior citizens in terms of membership, volunteer groups, and educational programs, on-campus, in the metropolitan community, and throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

We plan to continue to offer vibrant educational programs of relevance and interest to seniors, accessible to them (particularly as we complete our new parking facilities), and which enhance and enrich their lives through the visual arts. With full anticipation of further opportunities to serve the increasing senior population in the future, VMFA hopes to correspondingly increase its staff and fiscal resources to fully address and reach these valued citizens of our Commonwealth.