What is a Program?

As defined in the annual Tennessee Public Library Survey...

A program is any planned event which introduces the group attending to any of the broad range of library services or activities or which directly provides information to participants. Programs may cover use of the library, library services, or library tours. Programs may also provide cultural, recreational, or educational information, often designed to meet a specific social need.

Count all programs, whether held on- or off-site, that are sponsored or co-sponsored by the library. Exclude programs sponsored by other groups that use library facilities.

http://tsla.libguides.com/datacollection/PLS

The following activities are generally classified as programs:

- Courses on early literacy, technology, computers, career building
- Recreational courses, film showings
- Author visits, book discussions, story times, demonstrations

Some examples of programs:

- **Build Friendships**
  - Local heroes, leadership, volunteer aide programs, teen advisory group, local dance troupes

- **Promote Imagination**
  - Pretending and discovery, researching other cultures, travel planning workshops

- **Inspire Curiosity**
  - Legos, live animals, crafts, games, magic, puppetry, scavenger hunts

- The library offers home-work help sessions or GED-prep seminars.
- The library invites a local chef to do a cooking demonstration.
- Library staff host workshops on Microsoft Office.
- The children's librarian visits a local school to read a story.
- The library organizes and hosts monthly meetings for homeschooling families.
- The library plans and promotes a game night, but no families attend.
- The children's librarian plans and promotes summer reading programs.
- The library plans and promotes a musical performance, but the performer cancels. (You may still count attendees even if a program is cancelled.)
- The library plans and promotes a health fair where patrons may receive health screenings and health information.
The following activities do NOT qualify as programs:

- Library board meetings (even if public attends).
- Library staff members marching in a parade.
- The library’s booth at a local festival (this could count if planned events were at the booth, e.g. story times or author talks).
- The library holds an open house to kick off their summer reading program. Families are invited to drop in, but the event is not staffed and there are no planned programs scheduled.
- A librarian assists a library user one-on-one with computers or their resume (count as a reference transaction).
- A librarian delivers books to residents at a nursing home (count as circulation).
- Volunteers from a local nonprofit use the library’s children’s area to conduct tutoring sessions.
- A local business holds a meeting in the library’s meeting room.
- The library hosts an art exhibit which draws in several members of the community throughout the month.

A few notes:

For series, each individual event counts as a program (e.g. a 6-week series equals 6 programs). You may count programs toward your total even if nobody attends.

The following is a checklist to help you determine if an activity counts as a program:

- Did I plan and advertise the program in advance?
- Did my patrons learn anything new about the library and/or its resources or services?
- Was a library staff member or volunteer present to facilitate the program?
- Was the program open to more than one person?

If you have any questions about whether an activity qualifies as a library program, please contact your regional library or your State Data Coordinator at christy.chandler@tn.gov or 615-532-4601.