



## Museums for America

Sample Application MA-251969-OMS-22  
Project Category: Community Engagement

### Washington State Historical Society

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$142,713
Amount of cost share:	\$143,901

The Washington State Historical Society will carry out “Dialogue in Place,” an initiative to engage community and tribal partners in determining the future of historical markers placed across the state by the Society between 1900 and 1950. The society will partner with a community engagement consultant and community advisory committee to develop a process for civic dialogue that invites diverse stakeholders to discuss the complicated, inaccurate, or incomplete histories on the markers and determine whether to reinterpret, remove, or replace them. As a result, participants will feel empowered by engaging in civic dialogue and the public will have access to fact-based, inclusive historical interpretation in their communities. The society will use skills and knowledge gained through the project to produce a toolkit and training modules as guidance for other local history organizations who wish to initiate similar processes of civic dialogue and engagement.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

## Project Narrative

The mission of the Washington State Historical Society (WSHS) is to partner with our communities to explore how history connects us all. *Dialogue in Place* is a multi-year mission-driven project to develop, pilot, and evaluate a process for community engagement and tribal consultation to determine the future of monuments and historical markers placed by WSHS between 1900 and 1950. The current phases of *Dialogue in Place* will culminate in the implementation of recommendations for addressing markers and monuments that emerge from the community engagement process. Ultimately, *Dialogue in Place* will give WSHS the resources to assist local historical organizations in developing similar engagement processes to address complex histories in their own communities.

## Project Justification

### ***Which program goal/project category and associated objective(s) of Museums for America will your project address?***

*Dialogue in Place* will address the Museums for America **Program Goal 2: community engagement: maximize the use of museum resources to address community needs through partnerships and collaborations** and will meet **Objective 2.3: support community-focused planning and civic engagement**.

This project will create a community-focused process to determine what actions the WSHS will take to address historical markers and monuments which perpetuate inaccurate or incomplete representations of Washington's history. Through *Dialogue in Place*, WSHS has an opportunity to promote civic engagement by bringing together diverse community voices to critically examine how the past is documented in our public spaces.

### ***How will your project advance your museum's strategic plan?***

We believe that *Dialogue in Place* will advance two of our strategic goals: creating meaningful impact in each region of the state and embracing inclusion, diversity, equity and accessibility. By facilitating civic dialogue, this project has the potential to strengthen communities and create meaningful impact by supporting open discourse around difficult topics and developing community-driven processes that can be replicated across the state. Through targeted outreach to key stakeholders and underrepresented communities, this project will elevate diverse perspectives on the past, making the history we tell more equitable and inclusive in our public spaces.

In addition to advancing our organization's strategic goals, *Dialogue in Place* puts into action the WSHS's 2020 statement of commitment (Supporting Doc. 1) to dismantle systemic racism within our own organization. Addressing monuments and markers erected by WSHS was identified in this statement as part of a larger decolonization effort to include and amplify the stories of groups traditionally marginalized or excluded from the dominant historical narrative. While much of this decolonization work will take place at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma, *Dialogue in Place* is the most visible statewide manifestation of the WSHS's commitment to equity and inclusion in the histories we preserve and interpret. It will give us the opportunity to engage statewide partners in this equity work, beyond the audience of our museum in Tacoma.

This project will allow WSHS to develop a framework for the process of addressing problematic markers and provide training to WSHS staff on best practices pertaining to this work. In a later phase of the project, WSHS will provide resources and guidance to local history organizations wishing to initiate similar processes of civic dialogue around complicated, inaccurate, or incomplete histories in their communities. WSHS provides technical services and professional development opportunities to over two hundred local history museums and historical societies a year. The process and associated content created for *Dialogue in Place* will be shared across this statewide network of heritage practitioners with the potential for broad impact on all kinds of communities.

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Success at meeting strategic goals and achieving the desired impact articulated in our statement of commitment will be measured by pre- and post-engagement evaluation, tracking the numbers and demographics of participants, and partner surveys to determine if we are reaching new audiences, bringing forward different perspectives, and creating successful spaces for communities to come together in civic dialogue. This data will be used to fine tune our engagement practices and determine if *Dialogue in Place* is having meaningful impact and successfully meeting the needs of the communities we serve. WSHS will continue to measure the long term success of the program by the amount of locally-driven processes we are able to support.

### ***What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?***

This project is designed to determine the future of monuments and historical markers placed by WSHS across time in communities throughout our state and to engage the public in that process through effective civic dialogue. This need was identified through appeals and input from the public, internal research and reflection, and growing understandings of the impacts of problematic monuments and markers on marginalized groups.

The WSHS regularly receives emails and phone calls from community members asking that we revisit the language on historical markers. The frequency of these communications has increased since the murder of George Floyd and news coverage related to debates around Confederate monuments. Washingtonians we've heard from draw parallels between the racist rhetoric embedded in Southern monuments and our own tradition of celebrating pioneers, missionaries, and American military leaders in ways that erase the Indigenous experience. A recent email is exemplary of the types of feedback we regularly receive: *"The culture of our Indigenous provide so much to us to this day; their history, stories, art, and traditions inspire a depth of relationship and belonging with the natural world, honestly, their stellar designs and imagery sell the Pacific Northwest, right? We borrow everything from them to tell the world who Seattle is. Can you help us please tell the remaining Tribes and Tribal people and the world that Seattle will do our best to return the favor with acts of repair; undoing forms of harm, including the symbolic harm of this plaque?"*

In addition to responding to public calls to address these monuments and markers, *Dialogue in Place* seeks to acknowledge the WSHS's own role in promoting racist histories. Founded nearly 130 years ago, WSHS's origins are rooted in the desire to document the arrival of white explorers and settlers to the Washington Territory and to remember and memorialize how they transformed this place by their presence. The 1905 minutes of the WSHS board of curators articulates the intent behind the original historical marker program: *"The most permanent impressions are made upon old as well as young by object lessons and physical presentment. For this reason and aside from the pleasures and charms to be derived therefrom the Society desired to take immediate steps by suitable monuments and other material efforts to commemorate the more remote events of importance in our history."* Sites identified by the board as worthy of commemoration include the landing of the Spanish schooner *Sonora* in 1775, *"the first civilized men who ever trod upon the soil now within this State."* They go on to mention marking sites associated with *"massacres by savages,"* the *"discovery and naming"* of geographical features, and *"the place in every Western state where the first white child was borne."*

While not all of the markers mentioned in the 1905 minutes were erected, it is clear that the language on many of the 42 markers that were ultimately placed by WSHS presents a very limited and singular historical narrative devoid of context. A typical marker reads, *"In Memory of Wm. H. Brannan, His Wife & Child, Harvey H. Jones & Wife, George E. King & Wife, Enos Cooper who were massacred in this vicinity about Oct. 29, 1855 by a band of indians."* This marker fails to acknowledge that this event was part of the ongoing conflict following decades of colonial oppression of Indigenous groups which culminated in the terms of the Medicine Creek Treaty in 1854. These are the stories we hope to interrogate and address through the public process developed as part of this project. We hope that, in doing so, we can

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meet the community's need to acknowledge the complexities of the past, and have local historical markers no longer promote widespread historical myths but instead more closely reflect the historical record. (Supporting Doc. 2)

The context in which each of these markers was placed is equally as important to address as the events and individuals represented on the objects themselves. We had already begun our monument and marker audit when the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences published findings that Confederate monuments are directly linked to acts of racial violence. Researchers found that counties with higher numbers of Confederate monuments had higher numbers of lynchings between 1832 and 1950. (Henderson, Powers, Claibourn, Brown-Iannuzzi, Trawalter, 2021) This sobering data places monuments at the center of nationwide conversations about how history shapes the world around us and makes clear the urgent need to address monuments and historical markers placed by the WSHS through a process that is authentic, inclusive, and transparent.

### ***Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?***

The target audience is the general public in the geographical areas of the markers and monuments that our advisory committee deems the highest priority for addressing. Each monument that is subject to the public review process will engage a different group of stakeholders, depending on its context, which might include local community members, heritage practitioners, local historians, and tribal nations. Special efforts will be made to bring forward the voices of groups most directly impacted by the events memorialized on the markers in question. In most cases this will require thoughtful outreach to the tribal nations on whose land these historic events took place. The advisory committee for this project includes the tribal liaisons for the WSHS and the Burke Museum. While they cannot speak for all Washington tribes, their relationships will help facilitate the critical tribal consultation that will inform public dialogue around specific markers.

Communities impacted by these monuments have been involved in this project from the beginning, as WSHS put out a statewide call for individuals to locate monuments in their communities and report back to WSHS on their location and condition. This crowd-sourced information formed the basis for our formal audit, which was then augmented by staff research in WSHS's own archives. The result of this process can be found on the WSHS website, where an interactive map of all WSHS monuments can now be found: <https://www.washingtonhistory.org/across-washington/monuments-project/>.

The planning process for this project is ongoing and will be a major component of the grant-funded work. As the priority sites are identified by the advisory committee, we will begin outreach to those communities and local tribes and initiate conversations around the process we will develop with our consultant. Local partners will be key in supporting ongoing research about the markers, assembling critical stakeholders, and understanding the local context of the markers today.

### ***Who are the beneficiaries for this project?***

It is our strong desire that **Washington's tribal nations** will experience positive benefits from *Dialogue in Place*. By addressing monuments and markers that perpetuate historical myths, misrepresent events of the past, and/or fail to view the past from multiple perspectives, we can correct historical narratives that continue to fuel harmful misperceptions of Indigenous groups.

There are 400 **local history museums and heritage organizations** in Washington and the WSHS has a mandate to support their work by providing technical services, consultations, and opportunities for professional development. This project will benefit these organizations by creating and modeling best practices for public engagement around challenging histories. For heritage organizations in communities selected as part of this phase, this benefit will be immediately realized through their participation. We hope to continue providing this benefit in a future phase where

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WSHS will provide training to any history organization seeking to host dialogues about challenging topics or their own historical markers, and in doing so find renewed relevance to the communities they serve.

We believe that **communities across Washington** will benefit from *Dialogue in Place* and the opportunity to engage in facilitated civic dialogue that brings forward many voices and different perspectives. In this case, the conversation is around the ways that we construct historical narratives that sometimes exclude the experiences of groups directly affected by the events in question. We hope that *Dialogue in Place* will provide a space for constructive community dialogue and ultimately support the building of relationships and communication skills necessary to help communities productively address other difficult topics. The process will also benefit the **general public** by providing new access to the fact-based, inclusive public history products that will result from the dialogue process.

### Project Work Plan

#### *Key Partners and Collaborators*

The advisory committee will review the content and historical context of WSHS markers and monuments, prioritize items for public review, and provide feedback to WSHS staff and contractors on the community engagement and tribal consultation process. The committee is made up of tribal members, heritage practitioners, public historians, and representatives from other State agencies who manage historical marker programs.

#### Advisory Committee:

**Michael Finely** (Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation), Tribal Liaison, WSHS

**Polly Olsen** (Yakama Nation), Tribal Liaison, Burke Museum at the University of Washington

**Chieko Philips**, Heritage Program Director, 4Culture

**Ryan Karlson**, Interpretive Program Manager, Washington State Parks

**Scott Williams**, Cultural Resources Program Manager, Washington Department of Transportation

**Dr. Larry Cebula**, Professor of History, Eastern Washington University

**Ed Echtle**, Principal, Echtle Research

Local community and tribal partners will be identified for each monument and marker once the advisory committee has determined which markers will be addressed in the pilot phase of the project.

#### *Project Activities and Sequence*

In response to growing public demand for critical review of the histories memorialized in public spaces, in 2020 the WSHS began an initiative to audit monuments and markers erected by WSHS between 1900 and 1950. **Phase 1** of this project launched by inviting members of the public to contribute to an inventory by submitting GIS locations and photographs. Concurrently, WSHS staff consulted internal documents and archives for records regarding the initial placement of markers and monuments. This information was compiled and cross-referenced to create a comprehensive list of known markers attributed to the WSHS. Through this public crowd-sourcing phase, WSHS was also able to identify individuals with the knowledge and interest to contribute to future phases of the initiative. WSHS is currently engaged in **Phase 2** of the initiative: convening an advisory committee to consider the inventory list and prioritize markers for further review through a public process. We expect to have their prioritized list by April 2022.

**This proposal seeks funding from IMLS to support Phase 3** of *Dialogue in Place*, which begins by engaging a consultant with demonstrated expertise in facilitating conversations about difficult topics to create the public engagement process. The consultant will work with WSHS staff to develop, pilot, and evaluate engagement strategies in three initial communities with one or more markers identified as top priorities by our advisory committee for public review. The

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process will culminate in WSHS implementing the recommendations for the treatment of the monuments that emerge from the public dialogue, whether that is reinterpretation, removal, replacement, or no action. Following this pilot group, the project team will evaluate and revise the process as needed, and then implement the updated process in three additional communities. WSHS will utilize community feedback and the expertise of our consultant to further evaluate the process and finalize the best practices for community engagement that WSHS will use in **Phase 4**: addressing the remaining prioritized markers in the inventory.

WSHS has been in conversation with **Sarah Pharaon**, formerly of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience and currently the principal of Dialogic Consulting, about working together to develop this process. She has written a letter of commitment supporting this proposal (Supporting Doc. 3). Sarah brings decades of experience facilitating community-centered dialogue around challenging topics. She has a proven track record of bringing diverse groups closer together in understanding around the nuances and complexities of how history informs the world around us. Her approach is focused on four themes: to be **aspirational**, creating spaces that prompt reflection and give hope; **capacity building**, helping teams develop tools that are sustainable; **trauma-sensitive**, borrowing the term from Richard Josey that considers how historical trauma is not just about what happened in the past but also about what's still happening; **warm and engaging**, ensuring that all stakeholders and perspectives are welcome. We believe that an approach rooted in these values will position *Dialogue in Place* for lasting positive impact on the communities we serve through this program.

As WSHS proceeds in addressing the remaining prioritized markers, we will concurrently seek future funding to support **Phase 5** of the *Dialogue in Place* initiative, in which the WSHS will develop a toolkit and training modules based on the best practices developed throughout our own monument/marker audit to help heritage organizations across Washington facilitate community dialogue around challenging histories. We know that local history museums and historical societies often struggle to tackle uncomfortable stories, which limits their ability to relate to new audiences. By empowering local history organizations to host community conversations and support productive civic discourse, we hope to strengthen the public's capacity to acknowledge and discuss difficult stories in terms that are nuanced and complex.

### *Personnel and Resources*

*Dialogue in Place* represents a significant investment that will result in permanent resources that the WSHS can use to support civic engagement on history topics beyond the completion of the monuments and markers audit. This project will increase the capacity of our staff to facilitate and engage in conversations around difficult histories, benefitting both WSHS and the heritage groups that it serves. We also hope that future projects will benefit from our efforts through *Dialogue in Place* to build trust and meaningful relationships with new tribal and community partners.

The project is led by our Heritage Outreach team, with **Jay Mortensen** managing the staff that will develop, pilot, and evaluate the public engagement process and ultimately implement the recommendations that emerge from this process. Jay will also manage the project budget, contracting, and reporting. **Allison Campbell** will serve as the project manager, working directly with the consultant on all aspects of implementing and managing the project. Allison has been involved in the monuments and markers audit from the beginning and has already engaged with key partners and potential collaborators through her statewide outreach work.

If awarded funding, a **part time project assistant** will be added to the team to support all aspects of the project, particularly the logistics of the outreach process in making sure we are reaching a wide and diverse community audience. The project assistant will also provide critical support to evaluation, data management, and reporting efforts.

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Funding will also allow WSHS to contract with two **history graduate students** to assist with critical contextual research throughout the process.

Director **Jennifer Kilmer** will provide strategic leadership and expertise throughout program development and implementation. She will ensure that *Dialogue in Place* is meeting the goals laid out in the WSHS strategic plan and statement of commitment. Jennifer will also ensure that outreach to the tribes meets the requirements of the Centennial Accord, which is the 1989 agreement between the federally recognized tribes of Washington and Washington State that dictates the terms of government to government relations.

Contractor **Sarah Pharaon** will provide unique expertise in developing and modeling strategies and best practices around community engagement and civic dialogue. Sarah will work with Heritage Outreach staff to shape and refine the engagement process through piloting and rigorous evaluation. Sarah will conclude her work by training WSHS staff to lead future community engagement processes.

### *Necessary Resources*

WSHS is prepared to invest significant resources in the *Dialogue in Place* project. We are estimating that Director Jennifer Kilmer will devote 5% of her time to the project, Director of Heritage Outreach Jay Mortensen will devote 10% of her time, and Heritage Outreach Manager Allison Campbell will devote 25% of her time across the 2+ years of the project. In addition to the staff listed above, the project will be supported by the WSHS fiscal and development staff. Additionally, WSHS will devote financial resources toward other project costs such as travel and per diem, meeting supplies, facility rental, and other public programming costs. As well, WSHS will match grant funds devoted to replacing or recontextualizing the monuments in question either through use of existing resources or additional fundraising.

### *Tracking Progress*

Completion of project milestones will enable WSHS to effectively track project progress. These milestones include identification of the three pilot communities; development of the engagement process; completion of engagement processes in the pilot communities and identification of the desired solution-set for the monument(s) in question; completion of the community-determined solutions; evaluation of the first pilot phase; training of WSHS to conduct future engagements; completion of engagements for the next three communities; summative project evaluation conducted and finalization of the community engagement process.

### *Project Risks*

One risk to this project is **fatigue on the part of tribal communities** who have increasingly been called upon to support predominately white institutions in addressing systemic racism. We hope to mitigate this risk by leveraging relationships where trust has already been built and staying mindful of protocols when communicating with tribes.

Another risk to this project is the **highly polarized political environment** that could make it challenging to find common ground around recommendations for how to address monuments and markers in a way that respects multiple perspectives. We plan to mitigate this risk by drawing on the experience of our consultant, Sarah Pharaon, who has facilitated many conversations about contested histories and will bring specific strategies to address and reduce this risk.

This project will suffer if we are **not able to bring diverse voices to the table**. We plan to mitigate this risk through intentional and multimodal outreach to different segments of the communities we engage with. We will develop strategic relationships to reach specific audiences and increase our chances of hearing diverse viewpoints.

**Staff capacity** is always a concern with an initiative this large. To mitigate the risk that our staff will be overextended we will have clearly defined roles, additional staff support through grant funding where needed, and a commitment to follow the schedule of completion as closely as possible.

**Project Results**

Intended Results	Need Addressed	Date-Gathering Tools
Reinterpretation, removal, or replacement of physical WSHS monuments/markers in six communities	To address historical inaccuracies and/or lack of context on monuments and markers placed by the WSHS	Actions Taken  Final program evaluation
Communities feeling empowered to engage in civic dialogue around controversial topics	To create inclusive spaces to discuss multiple perspectives and find common ground  Model best practices for successful dialogue with the support of our consultant	Pre and post engagement surveys  Number and makeup of community members participating
Tribal nations will feel their history is no longer marginalized or ignored	To promote a more inclusive local history that acknowledges the experiences of Indigenous peoples	Partner surveys  Final program evaluation

**Tangible Products**

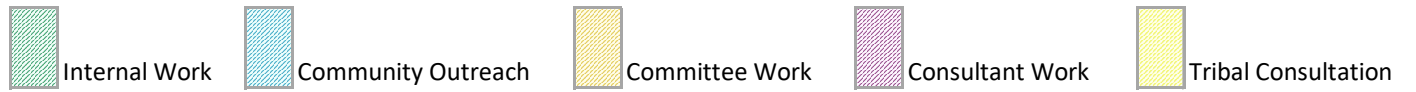
Following the public review and implementation of community recommendations **physical changes made to monuments and markers** will reflect more accurate historical narratives that incorporated the necessary context for viewers to more fully understand what took place and why.

Another product of this project that will serve as a resource well beyond *Dialogue in Place* is completed are the **skills and best practices** WSHS will develop for facilitating community dialogue that staff can carry into future projects. Community-driven museum work requires confidence in building relationships and building trust with different groups. The relationships and process knowledge that emerges from this project will serve to inform and support the community engagement work of the WSHS for years to come.

Communities will be empowered through this process to recognize and honor a local history grounded in the facts of the past. We hope to **strengthen local history museums and heritage organizations** by sharing this work with them and partnering to host community conversations beyond the work of addressing WSHS markers and monuments. This process will model how different community stakeholders can come together in civic discourse around complex and controversial histories to determine the future of markers or other historical resources in their community. A wonderful result of this work would be to build the capacity of local history museums to engage with and respond to their communities, thereby sustaining the impact of this funding into the future.



**Washington State Historical Society**  
**Schedule of Completion**



	2022					2023												2024												2025				
	Prior	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	
Review and prioritization of monuments by advisory committee; tribal consultation begins	Yellow																																	
Tribal consultation for 3 pilot sites		Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Background research of all 6 sites		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Enter contract with Dialogic Consulting, begin engagement process design		Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple	Purple																											
Hire part-time staff support; onboarding		Green	Green	Green	Green																													
Outreach to 3 pilot sites - stakeholders, local historical societies, government					Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue																								
Committee feedback on process design						Yellow	Yellow																											
On-site engagement, pilot site #1							Blue	Blue	Blue																									
On-site engagement, pilot site #2									Blue	Blue	Blue																							
On-site engagement, pilot site #3										Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue																					
Process evaluation							Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green																				
Process adjustments with consultant														Purple	Purple																			
Follow-through on engagement decision-making: Removal of monument/ new monument/ added context/ reinterpretation/etc.										Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Tribal consultation for sites 4-6										Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Outreach to next 3 communities														Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
On site engagement sites 4-6																					Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue	Blue
Follow-through on sites 4-6																						Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Process evaluation																																		
* Continued process evaluation																																		
* Continued outreach/engagement with additional priority sites																																		
* Reengage consultant; begin development of statewide toolkit																																		

