



# Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-253248-OMS-23

## Association of African American Museums

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$130,440
Amount of cost share:	\$131,615

The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) will expand its Executive Leadership Training program in collaboration with the Howard University School of Business. Building on a successful pilot program, AAAM will offer the leadership training program to 25 participants per year selected from mid-level and senior-level museum professionals and leaders. The program includes in-person activities at the annual conference, engagement in six strategic modules, and a collaborative capstone project. Participants will gain knowledge and insights about non-profit management and leadership and expand their network of colleagues and faculty members for life-long learning and support. Participants who complete the program will receive a joint certificate from AAAM and Howard University. The project enables AAAM to provide high-quality, affordable executive leadership training for museum staff to help them lead their institutions to a stronger, more sustainable future.

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 JUSTIFICATION

### Goal Addressed

The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) requests \$130,440 for three-year funding of a collaboration with Howard University's School of Business to offer a museum executive leadership training program.

This addresses IMLS **Goal 2**: Support the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums and **Objective 2.3**: Create learning and growth opportunities designed to build skills, enhance knowledge, and provide opportunities to share expertise.

### Need/Challenge

As documented in the IMLS-funded 2017 National Needs Assessment, the majority of African American museums are small and under resourced in staff and financial strength. After funding, the top need expressed by participants in the Assessment is for professional development.

AAAM sees providing professional development opportunities for its members and the field in general as one of its top priorities. To that end, AAAM offers an annual conference open to all who work in or with African American museums and emerging professionals.

In addition, under a cooperative agreement with IMLS, AAAM is offering **a**) paid internships for emerging professionals to work in African American museums, **b**) an in-depth training program for African American museum practitioners seeking to apply for federal grants; and **c**) conference scholarships to emerging and early career professionals.

Under a grant from the Mellon Foundation, AAAM is supporting three groups of African American museum professionals to devise professional development opportunities and products around the field-identified issues of **1**) security, **2**) traveling exhibitions, and **3**) a certification/accreditation program tailored to the needs of African American museums. In addition, AAAM sponsors scholarships to the National Museum of African American History and Culture's Workshops on Ethical Interpretation and to the Southeastern Museum Conference's Leadership Institute.

In 2022 AAAM partnered with the Howard University School of Business to pilot an Executive Leadership Training program for staff in African American museums. This

was an intensive four-day program for up to 25 students. (See Attachment 10-1 for program announcement.) Led by Howard University's Director of the Executive MBA program and its Executive Certificate Coaching Program, the training modules included:

- Strategic Leadership for Non-profit Executives
- Understanding the Non-profit Business Case
- Strategic Fundraising for Institutional Development
- Recruiting, Coaching, and Advancing Top Talent
- Leading Multiple Generations in the Workplace
- Strategic Public Communications and
- Capstone Project (see Attachment 10-2 and 10-3 for Project Assignment/Framework).

This virtual program ran for four consecutive eight-hour days. This is a joint certificate program from Howard University and AAAM.

Evaluation by this cohort of 23 (two dropped out) rated the overall excellence of the program of 4.9 on a scale of 5. The virtual nature of the program was well-appreciated by the students for saving travel time and costs. Four graduates of this pilot that ended in May 2022 have secured new leadership positions, including at Anacostia Community Museum, the National Blues Museum, The Black Lunch Table, and the Virginia African American Center.

Interest among other African Museum professionals is high: as of this writing, there are 22 applicants on the waiting list for the next program.

**AAAM seeks IMLS support to refine and continue this program for another three years.** The Association's longer-term vision is to develop and offer training programs for students and emerging professionals, mid-career professionals, and continue with this executive leadership program as final step along a continuum of trainings offered by AAAM and highly respected educational partners such as Howard University, the National Council on Public History, and other HBCU university museums and archives. This continuum will differ from many museum studies programs in that AAAM programs will focus on management, administration, and leadership development rather than programmatic and technical skills.

While all levels of training are needed, AAAM chose to start with the executive leadership program because it will have the most immediate and far-reaching impact on the field.

## Target Group

The target group for this executive leadership program are mid- to upper-level staff in African American museums. There are over 200 African American museums in the United States. The first cohort of 23 provided extensive feedback and evaluation of the pilot program and that has shaped the planning that responds to their input.

## Ultimate Beneficiaries

The ultimate beneficiaries are those who go through the program (~75 over three years) with a multiplier effect for their staff, boards, museums, and communities.

## **PROJECT WORK PLAN**

### Project Activities

#### Year I

Upon award announcement, AAAM will finalize the second cohort and inform them of the day-long kick-off during conference and the stipend for their in-person attendance. AAAM will also investigate the process for students in the course to receive continuing education credits.

In addition to adjusting the program based on the initial cohort's evaluation, the program will be expanded to five days with the first day being in-person at AAAM's annual conference in late July. Faculty and students will meet, discuss the curriculum and expectations, learn the framework for capstone projects, form student project teams, and begin the first module.

The virtual training will be offered in the fall. Evaluation will follow within a month of the program completion (See pilot project evaluation results in Attachment 10-4.) The results will be used to plan the next offering.

For the program in Years II and III, the selection and notification of cohort members will be completed by March of each year so there is ample time for cohort members to plan for attending the annual conference/kick-off. Otherwise, the activities will be essentially the same, with adjustments made based on cohort evaluations.

AAAM will continue to encourage a strong network among cohorts by offering a time and place to gather in person at the annual conference and encouraged to converse

throughout year via the AAAM Communities platform funded by NEH (See <https://aaam.connectedcommunity.org/home>).

### Risks and Mitigations

A major risk in the first year is that, because of timing, there will be too little time between project announcement/start date and conference for all members of that cohort to attend in person. While not ideal, AAAM will arrange for it to be a hybrid meeting if necessary.

In the pilot, emerging professionals applied. This program is meant for more senior professionals, and it may be necessary to add requirements for eligibility and screen applicants against those requirements. In the future, when AAAM is able to put the whole series of leadership training in place, it will be easier to steer applicants to the appropriate program.

### Personnel

Project Director will be AAAM Executive Director Dr. Vedet Coleman-Robinson. She will work with Howard University's Dr. Kim R. Wells to finalize the program and logistics and oversee the budget and Schedule of Completion. She will also oversee the final selection of cohort members.

AAAM staff will be in direct contact with cohort members each year; gathering applications, notifying applicants of acceptance into the program (or declining applications if necessary), and all other necessary communications and reimbursements for conference costs.

Dr. Kim R. Wells will lead the training program, finalizing the curriculum each year. Dr. Wells is Executive Director of [Executive Education](#) and the [Center for Career Excellence](#) at Howard University School of Business. Dr. Wells leads the school's [Executive MBA Program](#) as well as its Executive Coaching Certification Program, its Global Executive Leadership Program, and its Executive Leadership for Ministers Program. In addition, Wells also founded and manages GenNext Performance, which offers executive coaching.

He will direct faculty members. They are:

- Dr. John Flemming, scholar and former director of such African American Museums as the National African American Museum in Wilberforce, Ohio, the National Underground Railroad Museum, and the International African American Museum in Charleston, South Carolina, in addition to serving on numerous boards and President Bush's planning Commission for the National Museum of African American History and Culture at the Smithsonian.
- Dr. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, PhD, Professor of History at Howard University and founding director of Public History Program. The former Director of Graduate Studies she has served on the Executive Board of the Organization of American Historians and as the National Director of the Association of Black Women Historians. Dr. Clark-Lewis is an active member of the National Council on Public History.
- Dr. Ashley Robertson Preston, Assistant Professor of History at Howard University. Dr. Preston's past positions in the field of Public History include serving as director of the Mary McLeod Bethune Foundation-National Historic Landmark at Bethune-Cookman University. Her research has been published in The Journal of African American History, Journal of Black Studies, and The Journal of Negro Education.

### Resources Needed

Howard University's School of Business Executive Leadership certificate programs normally have a tuition of \$3,700 per student. AAAM's cost for this program is \$2,000 per student or \$50,000 per cohort. AAAM offers a discount registration fee of \$125 per participants who are AAAM members with a larger fee for non-members. In addition, if this application is awarded a grant, AAAM will provide a stipend of \$1,000 to each cohort member. Of that, \$425 will pay for their registration to the AAAM conference, plus up to \$575 for conference hotel, meals, and transportation costs so they may attend the in-person first day of the training.

AAAM will absorb staff time and fringe benefits into the operating budget.

### **PROJECT RESULTS**

#### Intended Results

AAAM's goal is to provide high-quality, affordable executive leadership training for mid- to senior-level museum personnel in order to help them lead their institutions to a stronger, more sustainable future thereby strengthening the field in general.

## Changes for Participants

Participants will gain

- Knowledge about best practices in non-profit management and leadership,
- Skills and tools to use in their home institutions,
- A larger network of colleagues and leading faculty members for life-long learning and support, and
- Confidence in exercising leadership and strengthening their museums.

## Products

The project does not rely upon a tangible product. The Capstone Project is essentially the process for building a strategic plan for a museum. It is possible that the results Capstone Project from each cohort team could form a resource library of case studies for others.

## Sustainability

Sustainability will be possible by employing several strategies. It would take an endowment of approximately \$2,000,000 to fully fund this program in perpetuity. While AAAM does want to build an endowment, it may not be possible to reach that dedicated \$2,000,000 mark near term. In future years, some costs may be covered by endowment drawdowns.

In the last few years there has been greater philanthropic interest in direct funding to African American institutions and those run by African Americans. Student training and workforce development are of interest to a sizeable share of the philanthropic community. AAAM has been aggressive in building its portfolio of institutional donors. Grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Lilly Foundation, Bloomberg, the Thomas and Jean Elmezzi Foundation and others testify to the Association's success. AAAM intends to continue building this funder portfolio and expects to seek grants and potentially a corporate sponsor for post-award years.

## **SUMMARY**

The IMLS-funded National Needs Assessment provided an in-depth picture of needs among those working in and with African American museums. AAAM's strategic plan was created to respond to those needs. The Executive Leadership certificate program is

just one example of AAAM's commitment to meeting the need, and it is the first of a larger vision of a three-part certificate program that creates a pipeline of support for African American museum workers at each stage of their careers.



