



## Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

Sample Application IGSM-252890-OMS-23  
Project Category: Lifelong Learning

### Iroquois Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$38,769
Amount of cost share:	\$11,643

The Iroquois Museum will develop an exhibit of contemporary Iroquois art and offer related programming targeted at youth, young adults, and adults. The exhibit will showcase artworks that include suspended installation and projection, welded steel sculptures, comic-drama and Claymation, glass works, clay monoprints, graphic novel and video-game inspired illustrations, electronic music, and documentary photography. Related programs will include The Mush Hole, an offsite theatrical dance interpretation of the experience of Indian residential schools; an onsite pop-up welding workshop; the Iroquois Indian Marching Band; and artist talks. Through this project, the museum will dismantle conventional assumptions about what constitutes Native art by introducing visitors to the wide variety of expressions and ways in which Iroquois/Haudenosaunee culture is represented today. Haudenosaunee creatives will benefit by presenting their work in a dignified and receptive setting and by expanding their network of opportunities. Visitors will benefit by participating in an environment of mutual respect and open dialogue, and accessing an alternate lens through which to reconsider our shared past.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan

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.

## Proposal Narrative - Iroquois Museum

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**Project Justification:** The Iroquois Museum (IM) in Howes Cave, NY requests \$38,769 in Lifelong Learning support to create *Outside the Box* - an exhibition and related activities for 2023-2024. Each year the Museum develops a new exhibit for our 750 square foot main gallery with complementary programming to accommodate a wide range of audiences. Themes have ranged from those intended to attract new audiences by their cross disciplinary and popular appeal such as *Buckskin to Bikinis: Haudenosaunee Wearable Art* (2015), *Indian Ink: Iroquois and the Art of Tattoos* (2013); *Native Americans in Music* (2010); to those that addressed timely and thought-provoking themes such as *Tonto, Teepees, and Totem Poles: Native American Stereotypes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (2018) and *Identity/Identify* (2021) which tackled tribal membership and blood quantum standards in Iroquois communities today. Our 2023 project, *Outside the Box*, speaks to a dismantling of the expectation of what Native art is and explores contemporary and less common modes of cultural expression.

*Outside the Box's* components are closely aligned with the goals of the IMLS Inspire! Grants and the Lifelong Learning category. As an institution, we strive to welcome and serve the widest possible segment of our large extended community. IM's admission rates are modest with additional discounts for elders, veterans, groups, and students. The exhibit and all special programming will be available to visitors at no additional charge. Admission to the offsite Mush Hole dance performance will also be free to all. Family passes are available through local and regional libraries which provide free entry and we participate in the Museums for All program for individuals and families eligible for SNAP assistance. The project includes a wide and atypical range of presentation forms, from visual art to storytelling; original dance composition to experimental short film; pop-up welding workshops; virtual and in person artist talks, and even an Iroquois marching band! This variety of offerings, while united under a common theme, are selected to appeal to a wide diversity of audiences. The project offers visitors multiple ways to explore their own creativity, engage with historical and contemporary events, cultural challenges and traditions, and reflect on their relevance and applicability to their own lives.

*Outside the Box* forwards one of the most important elements of the IM's Strategic Plan—that of broadening and increasing community engagement through outreach, specifically in the neighboring Capital Region. The project also addresses a second element of our Plan, that of incorporating an Iroquois voice into the Museum's growth, planning, leadership, and programming. Haudenosaunee reside on reservations as well as urban areas spanning two countries and multiple states across the USA. The nearest Iroquois community is 3 hours from the Museum with most at least 6- 8 hours distant. This physical separation from the cultural group that we strive to showcase presents a fundamental challenge to realizing the level of involvement and input from the Iroquois community that we seek, and one which is absolutely necessary to the accuracy and authenticity of our interpretations. Our small staff and board includes six Iroquois, but none are contemporary arts professionals. In keeping with the objectives of our Plan, the inclusion of specialized Haudenosaunee artists in our programming and the ability to develop our exhibit concepts and other programming with more lead time is only feasible with grant support. Also integral to the IM mission is the engagement with, promotion, and support of Iroquois art and artists, an objective well met by this project. Additionally, *Outside the Box* directly addresses our Strategic Plan goal of diversifying the type of performances that we offer to engage with fresh audiences and invigorate existing ones. The guiding principal of the IM's Plan has remained unchanged since our founding—to achieve excellence as an anthropological museum while maintaining financial stability. This project, if

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funded, would enable the Museum to meet several key objectives, while offering the kind of imaginative programming that will inspire our visitors, build attendance, and grow our reputation as a principal destination in the region.

The idea for *Outside the Box* emerged out of modifications in the structure of one of our reliable sources of unearned income - the New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA). As an anthropology museum we have regularly applied for and received funding through NYSCA's Folk Arts Program which supported traditional dance and arts demonstrations. Restructuring of NYSCA's guidelines and a shift away from project-based support provided an exceptional opportunity for us to "think outside the box" ourselves. In-house surveys demonstrate that visitors come to the Museum looking for an indigenous perspective to questions they have about Iroquois history, philosophy, identity, and cultural sovereignty. A recent in-house survey at our most heavily attended event produced the surprisingly encouraging results that engagement directly with the artists, the art, and the exhibit text accounted for 83% of the concepts that visitors learned in our facility.

Over 32% of our visitors are youth and young adults. This generation engages easily with digital products, graphic novels, virtual programming, self-expression, and narratives that feature youth. We have long wanted to share with our visitors some of the extraordinary performance work being produced by Iroquois that did not neatly fit within the definition, boundaries, and forms generally associated with traditional arts but, within the constraints of Folk Arts, lacked the means. In many ways, these types of Haudenosaunee expressions represent a strong, forward-looking and youthful voice in response to a rapidly changing culture and social environment. In others, despite their pioneering packaging, they remain vehicles for carrying traditional and empowering messages. While traditional art forms such as social dance, basketmaking, and woodworking generate internal cultural continuity and cohesiveness, the modern esthetic and vocabulary showcased by *Outside the Box* resonates with current generations, both Native and non-native.

Feedback from general operating grant reviews has praised the quality and innovativeness of the Museum's exhibits, but programmatically, we have been less imaginative, relying heavily on conventional tried and true and more ethnographic sorts of presentations (instrument and headdress making, social dance, outfit making, beadwork, etc.). The Museum has been approached by numerous Iroquois creatives encouraging us to showcase less traditional forms of expression as valid statements of contemporary values and concerns. A Tuscarora fingerweaver suggested her community's Marching Band; a Mohawk metalsmith that we collaborated with on an earlier project conceived of pop-up welding workshops; a young illustrator shared a new form of graphic-novel inspired storytelling, a beadworker suggested an award-winning Mohawk burlesque dancer who uses her unusual platform to draw attention to land recognition, the power of Indigenous women, and the historical gender constraints of Colonialism. Current and former Iroquois staff members and the outcome of numerous discussions in Iroquois communities also stressed our responsibility to address the issue of government and church-run Indian residential schools (in operation from 1860 – 1960) in our programming. We went in search of a less documentary, impressionistic presentation of this largely unacknowledged and disturbing story. Kaha:wi Dance Theatre's *Mush Hole* performance, which features stories of the survivors of the experience and a Q & A after the performance, was highly recommended by Iroquois and non-Iroquois alike and, as a

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creative form not generally associated with Native artists, has become a cornerstone of the project. Feedback, dialogue, and observation of visitors on the floor of the Museum has led us to understand that while our audiences may be anticipating a traditional type of expression when they come to Museum events, almost all welcome the unexpected if provided with a bridge to its foundations, language, and significance.

The target groups most immediately impacted by our project are the 38 participating Iroquois artists and our 8700 onsite, and 400+ offsite and virtual visitors. As indicated above, Iroquois have been instrumental in the suggestion of potential presenters and the format for this project. The participating artists whose work will be displayed in the gallery will benefit from the opportunity to exhibit in a high profile, dignified setting and to gain broad and receptive audiences for their less conventional cultural expressions. Like the visual artists, the presenters will benefit by reaching audiences through the Museum that they are unlikely to reach through their own networks. This expanded network could lead to additional opportunities, collaborations, and a larger following for their work. Non-native visitors will benefit by the opportunity to be introduced to these original expressions of contemporary Iroquois life and Indigenous concerns directly from the personal and shared experiences of Iroquois themselves and, through the workshops, to exercise their own creative voices. The long-term benefit of the project represents the acknowledgement of a shared and uncomfortable history; a step toward dismantling stereotypes and narrow expectations of what constitutes Native art; a reinvigoration of the Museum's offerings; and a rich cultural experience for our visitors that will serve as a touchstone for their future interactions with both art and the Iroquois.

**Project Work Plan:** *Outside the Box* includes 2 components – an exhibit in the Museum's main gallery and a season's worth of special programming for youth, older youth and adults. The term "outside the box" suggests thinking differently, unconventionally or from a new perspective. The exhibit will showcase works that use mediums and expressive vocabulary that epitomize this concept such as Hannah Claus's suspended installations and works that include projection elements; Margaret Jacobs welded steel sculptures that combine ironworkers' tools, chains and hardware with fabricated steel to speak of a history of adaptation, resilience, and endurance; VerRONAka, a 10-minute comic-drama and a short claymation piece by Paulette Moore; glasswork and clay monoprints on handmade paper by Roger Parish; graphic novel and video-game inspired illustrations by Arihlonni David; original electronic music by The Halluci Nation (formerly A Tribe Called Red) which combines hip hop, reggae, and dubstep with Indigenous rhythms and vocals; and documentary photography by Stan Williams, focused on community activism and intended to "redefine the art medium and alter its monolithic identity." Presentations will include a 60-minute offsite theatrical dance performance of *The Mush Hole* by Kaha:wi Dance Theatre with a Q & A and access to a Pre and Post Performance Study Guide; a pop-up sculptural welding workshop with Margaret Jacobs; a performance by the Tuscarora-based Iroquois Marching Band, and artist talks by visual artists Hannah Claus and neo-burlesque dancer Lauren Ashley Jiles (Lou Lou la Duchesse de Riere). Work samples and links are included in the supplemental materials.

The only risk to the success of the project would be the unforeseen availability of a large number of the proposed presenting and exhibiting artists. Nearly all have already been contacted and fees, schedules, and availability of artwork discussed and agreed upon. While this wide diversity in programming and

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media is key to our goals, no single individual carries so much of the responsibility that the overall success of the project would be in jeopardy should one or more become unavailable during the period between now and the commencement of the grant period.

Tasks related to the workshops and presentations include contacting each of the presenters to determine and confirm times, date/s, format, and length of presentation and producing contracts. Tasks will also include scheduling offsite performance dates and staffing with the 450-seat University of Albany Performing Arts Center (UAPAC); and discussion of any special needs for onsite programs such as materials, sound system, safety equipment such as goggles and gloves. Tasks specific to the exhibit include broadening the search for applicable work for the exhibit with the assistance of contacts and colleagues in Iroquois communities; reviewing potential works for technical and physical requirements; arranging for the loan and transport of works; developing interpretive content, working with designer to create branding and panels; developing and printing a gallery guide/brochure and exhibit installation. Tasks also include arranging for shipping and transport of art, scheduling opening reception, developing postcards, effective promotional packages and advertising for both the exhibit and all special events.

Planning and implementation of the project will be conducted by Museum staff, and, in the case of The Mush Hole, in conjunction with the technical staff at UAPAC. The IM's Curator of Exhibitions and Museum Director will develop the exhibit and work with the artists to develop its interpretation. The team will include Ditch Design in the production of branding, panels, and collateral materials for the exhibit based on concepts and text produced and reviewed by the team. Presentations and workshops and their respective promotion will be organized by the Curator of Exhibitions in partnership with the Assistant to the Director/Marketing Coordinator. For the metal sculpting workshops, IM staff member Ralph Castro (groundkeeper and custodian) will be added to the team to oversee and implement logistics and site preparation. Website updates, overall project and financial administration will be managed by Steph Shultes, IM Director.

A large proportion of our Curator of Exhibitions, Director, and Marketing Coordinator's salaries and time is necessary to bring this project to fruition as it represents the bulk of our 2024 programming. Since it represents a challenging divergence from our standard presentations and the building of relationships with new artists and new audiences, we anticipate a substantial time investment overall and have initiated planning for this. The tasks relating to the exhibit will take place from September 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 with exhibit installation scheduled for March and completed by April 1, and an opening reception in early May. Logistical preparations and promotion for the exhibit, presentations, and workshops will begin in the fall of 2023 and continue through spring of 2024. Additional programming promotion will take place from May through August 2024. The project represents 35% of our Curator's time, 25% of our Directors, 10% percent Marketing Coordinator's time, and 2 days of our custodian's time. We anticipate that the balance of costs associated with the project not covered by this request will be covered by IM's general operating budget, a Humanities NY Action Grant, and a proportion of a New York State Council on the Arts grant that we designate for staff salaries.

Visitor reaction, feedback, and response will be gathered and collated throughout the season through brief interviews; visitor comment book; comments on social media; informal observation by staff and

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volunteers of visitor behavior in the on and offsite spaces and engagement with the presenting artists; and by the type and number of questions asked and/or posted relating to, or inspired by, the presentations and exhibit. The IM will collect information on the numbers and ages of visitors, and the regions they represent. This information will be entered in our admissions database. Additional quantitative indicators of our success will be an increase in visitation through the year and into the next and return visitation by the same individuals more than once during the season as evidence that our programming is achieving our objectives.

**Project Results:** The project's intention is to challenge conventional assumptions about what constitutes Native art by introducing our visitors to the wide variety of expressions and ways in which Haudenosaunee culture is represented today. In doing so, we expect to generate new audiences and deeper understandings about the intergenerational impact of historical policies and the ways in which western media forms have been adapted and employed to carry a timely and compelling Haudenosaunee message. In an environment of mutual respect and open dialogue we hope to offer visual and intellectual inspiration to IM visitors and an alternate lens through which to reconsider our shared past and our accountability in a racially and culturally diverse society moving forward.

Visitors, including those without formal arts experience, will have the opportunity to fire their imaginations and become empowered by the act of creating through workshop participation. Learning to uncover the underlying messages in unfamiliar types of expression is in itself empowering and imparts skills that can be brought to any future arts encounter regardless of size, setting, or cultural context.

Several products will result from *Outside of the Box*. The first is an original exhibit that will engage approximately 8700 visitors. Additional products include an offsite theatrical dance performance. Onsite offerings include 2 artist talks also recorded and shared virtually; a 2-day workshop; and a musical performance. Each of these products will be further supported by printed program guides and, where feasible, accompanied by power point presentations on the artist's representative communities.

As with our most successful past projects, the intangible benefits of *Outside the Box* will extend beyond the project period. The insights gained from the exhibit, presentations, and especially The Mush Hole performance, will be impactful and reflected upon by the visitors long after the experience itself. The effort made to give authority to a Haudenosaunee voice, including those who are no longer with us, within our institution and to recognize all types of expression as authentic will reverberate through Iroquois communities, strengthening our existing relationships as we evolve as an institution and lay the groundwork for future creative collaborations.

Schedule of Completion - Iroquois Museum

	Sept - Oct 23	Nov-23	Dec-23	Jan-24	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Jul-24	Aug-24	Sep-24
Notify Kaha:wi Dance Theatre & Iroquois Marching Band of funding	→											
Send out letter of agreement/contract with Kaha:wi Dance Theatre & Band				→								
Further research potential participants & develop outline for exhibit	→			→								
Contact artists for loan of art work				→	→							
Arrange art shipping & insurance				→	→							
Develop & review text for exhibit panels and gallery guide				→	→							
Promote exhibit. Promote special programs						→	→	→	→	→	→	→
Work with Ditch to design exhibit panels & gallery guide				→	→							
Review branding concept & text panel design					→	→						
Schedule presentations & workshops					→	→						
Send out letters of agreement to presenters					→	→	→	→				
Contact UAPAC to schedule date for Mush Hole.					→	→						
Print exhibit panels, Gallery guides						→	→					
Install exhibition						→	→	→				
Open exhibition to the public							→	→				
Host Opening reception for exhibition								→	→	→		
Develop handouts and power point presentations for artist demo and								→	→	→	→	
Record live artist talks and post online										→	→	
Conduct evaluations of exhibit and special programming							→	→	→	→	→	→

**Applicant Name: Iroquois Museum**  
**Project Title: Outside the Box**

<b>Performance Measure</b>	<b>Data We Will Collect</b> (e.g., counts, costs, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, hours, observations, opinions, feelings)	<b>Source of Our Data</b> (e.g., members of the target group, project staff, stakeholders, internal/external documents, recording devices, databases)	<b>Method We Will Use</b> (e.g., survey, questionnaire, interview, focus group, informal discussion, observation, assessment, document analysis)	<b>Schedule</b> (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, beginning/end)
<b>Effectiveness:</b> The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results				<p>Visitors will be surveyed upon entry to the museum as to if they have been to the museum more than once in the season.</p> <p>Visitor behavior in the gallery space and the level and type of engagement with guest artists will be observed in both offsite and onsite settings. Length of engagement, questions asked, and amount of attention to the various components of the project will be recorded by museum staff and volunteers. Observations will be discussed with the program staff on a monthly basis, compared to the project's objectives, and collated at the end of the season.</p> <p>Numbers of visitors, approximate age categories, and zip codes will be entered into the attendance database at the close of each day and compared to previous year's attendance to document visitation trends and the effectiveness of outreach efforts.</p> <p>Visitors will be randomly asked to provide feedback in the form of a brief exit survey seeking their impressions and what insights they may have gained through the programming. Reception staff and volunteers will conduct these surveys several times during our busiest months (June – August) and record results. Requests for additional programming in the same vein in the future obtained through informal onsite conversations will also be an indicator of the project's effectiveness.</p> <p>Guest register will be located as you exit the gallery throughout the season and comments encouraged</p>
<b>Efficiency:</b> How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group				<p>Project budget and staff time will be evaluated 3 times per year for adherence to original budget projections.</p> <p>Although the nature of each individual's engagement will differ, a per person cost investment based on those served will be produced at the close of the year.</p>

<p><b>Quality:</b> How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group</p>	<p>We will conduct follow-up interviews in person or via email with Iroquois guests and presenters as to the effectiveness of the programming and exhibit in terms of accurate cultural representation and value from a Haudenosaunee perspective. These interviews will be conducted by our curator of exhibitions and be ongoing throughout the season.</p> <p>Visitors' reaction to the programs and feedback will be collected throughout the season by our Marketing Coordinator, reception staff and volunteers through brief interviews and specific questions relating to visitor expectations and satisfaction.</p> <p>Social media comments relating to the programming will be monitored as to level of interest and how well received the various programming is.</p>
<p><b>Timeliness:</b> The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe</p>	<p>The Museum's Director will monitor the project's progress several times during the year comparing the projected dates and tasks to timely accomplishment of these activities. Curator and Marketing Manager will report to the Director any issues in achieving completion of project tasks according to the schedule.</p>