



Museums Empowered

Sample Application ME-253373-OMS-23
Project Category: Diversity and Inclusion

National Museum of Mexican Art

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$174,956
Amount of cost share:	\$186,152

The National Museum of Mexican Art will increase access and build inclusive design and accessibility capacity across the museum for blind or low-vision visitors. Project activities include engaging an accessibility consultant who will conduct a series of 12 staff workshops, convene an inclusive design advisory group and an inclusive design working group, and develop an inclusive design road map for the museum. The project will continue the organization's work to make the museum accessible to all and result in a method that enables blind and low-vision visitors to engage with Mexican art and culture in the museum.

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

The National Museum of Mexican Art (NMMA) proposes a project called *Arte for All: Accessibility at NMMA* to build capacity related to inclusive design and accessibility practices across all aspects of the Museum with an emphasis on blind or low vision visitors. NMMA will work with Prime Access Consulting (PAC) on a series of 12 staff workshops, and develop an Inclusive Design Advisory Group, an Inclusive Design Working Group and an Inclusive Design Roadmap for NMMA. Whether helping with the fundamentals of the built environment or the exacting nuances of advanced digital interfaces, PAC believes that good design is inclusive design. This means recognizing and honoring the agency of all people independent of ability and disability. PAC subscribes to the environmental/social model of disability, which states that it is our environments that are disabling, not people who are disabled.

Program Goal/Project Category and Associated Objectives

This project will address IMLS Museums Empowered (ME) Goal 2, Diversity and Inclusion and Objective 2.1, Create training and learning opportunities that increase cultural competency of museum staff and enhance relevancy of the museum programs.

NMMA has always emphasized cultural competency as it relates to Mexican Art and Culture. We pride ourselves on our first voice perspective, presenting Mexican Art and culture from our own point of view. Recently, we have taken steps to increase cultural competency with regard to children and families with intellectual disabilities by developing an app to assist these families with planning at trip to the Museum; this process included training staff to develop cultural competency for working with these audiences. The *Arte for All: Accessibility at NMMA* project will push NMMA even further, building cultural competency around working with visitors with disabilities with a focus on blind or low vision audiences.

Advancing NMMA's Strategic Plan

Arte for All: Accessibility at NMMA advances two components of NMMA's current strategic plan:

- 1) By training NMMA staff to build a welcoming environment for all, including blind and low vision visitors, this project will help NMMA meet its goal of producing high quality programming that meets the needs of our community.
- 2) This work will increase access to Mexican art and culture for communities across the Midwest and beyond and will help NMMA establish a stronger national presence, enabling NMMA to extend its reach and build greater awareness of its contributions to U.S. arts and culture.

Need, Problem, or Challenge

This project came about as a result of NMMA's work with the Terra Foundation for American Art's Art Design Chicago initiative, a platform for collaboration and collective action to explore and elevate Chicago's rich visual-art and design histories and creative communities. Art Design Chicago is intended to build new understandings of the city through art and design, and to strengthen vital connections between its cultural organizations, creatives, and local communities. Developed by the Terra Foundation for American Art in partnership with cultural leaders from across the city, this initiative celebrates the diverse individuals, groups, and movements that have made and continue to make Chicago a distinctive hub for creative production and innovation. The second iteration of Art Design Chicago, featuring a series of exhibitions and events in 2024 as well as collaborative projects and programs throughout the intervening years, offers new opportunities to share the multiplicity of voices and stories that contribute to the city's dynamic artistic identity and cultural history.

Through work around engagement, the Terra Foundation is prioritizing projects that will help organizations advance equity and become more inclusive. They seek projects that highlight the histories of, and provide opportunities for, Chicago's diverse makers; are led or informed by a multiplicity of voices; reach audiences that reflect the diversity of Chicago's communities through inclusive, equitable, and accessible programs; and include collaborations that possess the potential to bring about sustainable and mutually beneficial partnerships across communities and cultures. As part of this project NMMA decided to pursue engagement with blind/low vision audiences who are not addressed by art museums currently. These include limited English proficient Spanish speakers, immigrants, and

low-income families who may not receive additional supports. Reaching this audience is important because Latinos have a higher risk for vision loss than other demographics. Some chronic conditions, such as diabetes and high blood pressure, can put people at higher risk for vision loss, and these conditions are more common among Latinos than non-Hispanic whites. Latinos are almost 2.5 times more likely to have diabetes, compared to non-Hispanic whites and 68% of Latinos have poorly controlled high blood pressure, compared to 54% of non-Hispanic whites. Diabetes can lead to diabetic retinopathy, the leading cause of blindness in working-age adults in the United States. High blood pressure can cause glaucoma. Because Hispanics and Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing minority group in the United States, by 2050, half of people living with glaucoma will be Hispanic or Latino (source: CDC.gov).

In 2019, the Museum worked with PAC to pilot audio described media, or descriptive recordings for blind or low vision visitors for the exhibition *40 años a la esperanza*. While NMMA took some steps to learn about how to produce the audio descriptions, the initiative was spearheaded by someone who left the organization and it did not continue once the exhibition concluded. For this project, we are taking a more global approach and broadening the work to inclusive design, we also intend for a cross-departmental team to spearhead this project and to educate the entire staff to foster sustainability. We have initiated a dialog with members of the blind and low vision community so that we can understand how we should work with them and create a welcoming environment for them at NMMA.

Target Group and Beneficiaries

The target group for this project is primarily blind or low-vision visitors, but also more broadly, any visitor who would benefit from inclusive design, from older adults, to neurologically diverse people. NMMA has been in conversation with representatives from the American Foundation for the Blind, who approached the Museum about developing resources for them. Additionally, as part of this project, NMMA will develop an advisory group that will provide guidance. The ultimate beneficiaries of this project will be Museum visitors, especially blind or low-vision visitors, but also NMMA staff. This organization-wide project will build staff capacity for working with a broad range of visitors and inclusive design skill sets will be highly beneficial to staff during their time at NMMA as well as when they move on to other organizations.

PROJECT WORK PLAN

NMMA will work with Prime Access Consulting (see background in supporting document) on a series of 12 staff workshops, and develop an Inclusive Design Advisory Group, an Inclusive Design Working Group and an Inclusive Design Roadmap.

The project will be led by the Museum's education department, led by education director Vanessa Sanchez, who will be assisted by NMMA's Gallery Education Coordinator, Mario Hernandez. Sanchez and Hernandez will manage the project with the assistance of PAC. They will form an Inclusive Design Working Group that includes representatives from each department in the Museum, including education, visual arts, permanent collection, development, communications, and operations.

The project will begin with a series of 12 workshops for NMMA staff across education, visual arts, permanent collection, operations, and communications staff. The in-person sessions will build organizational capacity in terms of inclusive design and accessibility practices across all aspects of the NMMA. The 90–120-minute sessions include lectures with discussion, and activities led by Corey Timpson, Sina Bahram, and other PAC staff who will present on various topics of inclusive design and accessibility, share real world examples from peer organizations and facilitate discussion at the end of each lecture. PAC will administer surveys prior to the workshop sessions as part of the front-end evaluation (along with documentation and literature reviews) in order to ensure an understanding of organizational and staff perceptions, comfort, and experience in dealing with inclusive design and accessibility concepts and practices. Another survey will be administered a few weeks after the sessions are complete in order to track how staff and organizational sentiments may have evolved, and to provide critical feedback to the session administrators for constructive evolution of the sessions and their administration.

Workshops will include the following:

Lecture: Preface and Level Setting	Outcomes
<p>This session is the primer for the entirety of the sessions (lectures and activities). It examines intentionality and sets a consistent and common understanding of approach, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive Design and Accessibility definitions - Ethos - Approach (including PM, Sequencing, etc.) - Real world examples - Facets of inclusion - Strategic outcomes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A shared vocabulary and terminology around the work • Recognition of the implications of inclusive design and accessibility within the broader operational context of the organization. • A preliminary understanding of the benefits of a more inclusive practice. • A realization that inclusivity and accessibility need not be viewed as a cost center. • An understanding of the breadth of impact across all aspects of the organization and those whom it serves. • Exposure to the importance of the work while contextualizing that importance against the reality that this work takes time and must be a sustainable effort.
Lecture: Inclusive Design Ecosystem	Outcomes
<p>The Inclusive Design Ecosystem examines the various facets of the ecosystem of experience design and looks at specs, standards, and methodology for inclusively design, accessible outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Content design and development - Graphic and Information Design - Environmental Design - Interface Design (natural, tangible, digital, human) - Media Design & Production - Examples & Outcomes in the wild - Facilitated discussion (and Q&A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of how to consider the entire ecosystem when addressing inclusion and accessibility. • An understanding of how stylistic, esthetic, and semantic choices relate to the ability of all visitors to benefit from that which is being presented. • Developing an understanding of where opportunities exist at the design phases of exhibition and program development. • Developing an understanding of how opportunities taken early on in project development can have low to no cost budget implications but have a profound impact on the accessibility of the project's outcomes. • Insights into the experiences of peer institutions (both successes and opportunities).
Activity: Inclusive Design Crit & Remediation	Outcomes
<p>This session is a crit and remediation design exercise for existing installations based on the ecosystem elaborated in the prior lecture.</p> <p>Using the elements of the inclusive design ecosystem, groups of 3-5 people will be led through a structured activity to analyze an existing installation and find opportunities to increase inclusion and access.</p> <p>Teams will workshop the opportunities found and propose remediation tactics as well as future potential standards based on substantiated experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on experience applying an inclusive design methodology against the facets of the ecosystem when examining a live exhibition, installation, and/or program. • Experience discussing considerations of accessibility and inclusion with colleagues from various departments; thereby breaking down traditional trade-specific silos that typically exist in the organization. • Experience thinking through an entire visitor journey with an emphasis on examining those visitors with a variety of different abilities. • Learning specific processes for reviewing exhibitions and understanding opportunities for improving accessibility within real-world constraints.
Lecture: Collections & Information Management	Outcomes

<p>Identifying, Collecting, Cataloguing, Structuring, and Preserving content inclusively, while considering multi-sensory affordances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Inclusive collecting (democratic approaches, concepts of erasure) - Collections Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Data Sovereignty o Metadata o Enterprise Content Management Methodology - Open Access - Visual Description - Examples of the potential that can be realized - Facilitated discussion (and Q&A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how to include accessibility and inclusive design specific considerations within collections systems and practices. • Understanding how to apply an inclusive design methodology when engaging in various collections practices • Understanding the role of various accessibility-specific metadata (e.g. visual descriptions) in providing a more inclusive visitor experience. • Learning how to take a multimodal and multisensory approach to collections with an aim to enhance the inclusivity of offerings. • Understanding how to balance seemingly contradictory concepts such as open access, erasure, accessibility, inclusion, preservation, and conservation without compromising quality nor accuracy.
Activity: Visual Descriptions	Outcomes
<p>Briefly review the Art Beyond Sight (ABS) guidelines: http://www.artbeyondsight.org/handbook/acs-guidelines.shtml</p> <p>Most of the activity will be group work generating both short and long descriptions of pieces from the NMMA's collection.</p> <p>Groups will report out their descriptions, both short and long, for various artworks. They will receive real-time feedback from PAC staff on those descriptions and then be given the chance to put that feedback to work on subsequent descriptions. These description activities will be tightly timed.</p> <p>The discussions that arise during this activity are the most useful takeaway and opportunity for learning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding how visual descriptions are used by people who have low/no vision in navigating digital experiences. • Learning how to engage in the practice of visual description while tackling a myriad of questions along the way around artistic intent, race, gender identification, stylistic conveyance, and interpretation. • Understanding the mechanics of description including short and long, considerations of institutional voice, length, orientation, jargon, the use of language to convey the gestalt of a work, and use of metaphor. • Hands-on experience authoring descriptions of a range of different works and content type with some feedback to iterate on descriptions and achieve a baseline knowledge among the staff.
Lecture: Inclusive Museum Services	Outcomes
<p>When visiting a museum or gallery, the visitor takes a journey through content, service, and experience. This session covers services organizations offer that support the visitor through their journey.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Visitor Services - Service Affordances (including access technologies) - Remote Audience Support and Engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the opportunities realized when applying inclusive design considerations throughout multiple touchpoints across the visitor journey. • A preliminary understanding of the best practices for providing service affordances including exhibition-based, programmatic, and daily visitation. • An understanding of the implications for staffing, training, resourcing, and key communications required to support the roll-out of service affordances.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wayfinding, Signage and Orientation - Integration of information systems - Facilitated discussion (and Q&A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A developing understanding of critical wayfinding concerns, and approaches that are inclusively integrated in program spaces which provide autonomy to visitors with a range of disabilities. • An understanding of how to utilize existing organizational tools, such as CRMs and ticketing platforms to further inclusive accessibility.
Activity: Wayfinding 101	Outcomes
<p>Broken into groups. PAC will help staff identify a location-based task for completion. This task completion, which includes determining both departure and destination points, will then be critiqued and remediated in consideration of the 5 points of inclusive wayfinding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience working through a specific location-based wayfinding task with an emphasis on designing a solution that allows for independent navigation and orientation, and inclusive (instead of segregated) scenarios. • Experience conceptualizing potential solutions against organizational constraints in surfacing priorities, limitations, and actionable outcomes. • Experience iterating solutions development to sustainably and efficiently increase inclusion and access over time.
Lecture: Digital Design	Outcomes
<p>Web & Digital Content Accessibility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Software and Semantics - WCAG - Apps & OS - Social Media - Facilitated Discussion (and Q&A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high-level understanding of how to apply an inclusive design methodology to a range of digital design projects including linear, nonlinear, time-based media, websites, apps, and 3rd party platforms. • A basic understanding of specific software and semantic considerations that are critical in furthering web and digital content accessibility. • A basic understanding of existing standards, and field-specific guidelines and best practices for digital accessibility, including websites. • An understanding of the most common misconceptions and missteps taken by organizations when it comes to digital design and inclusivity.
Activity: Digital Ins and Outs	Outcomes
<p>Participants will use browser-based accessibility tools (such as Wave, Chrome Lighthouse, etc.) to analyze the organization's website, identify potential issues, and will collaborate on remediation tactics.</p> <p>Participants will also perform an activity of creating and publishing accessible social media posts (Instagram, Twitter) using accessibility functions of their mobile devices. They will also find and consume the</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience learning how to utilize a range of tools providing a basic review for accessibility, giving a sense of the overall performance of the site against existing standards and accessibility needs. • Hands-on experience reviewing specific issues on the organization's website and learning potential approaches for remediation to improve accessibility. • Experience creating accessible social media posts on a range of platforms such as Twitter and Instagram and experiencing the current accessibility limitations of the platforms while exploring how to improve accessibility through captioning and image descriptions.

posts created by other group members using access technologies.	
Lecture 06: Inclusive Corporate Practices	Outcomes
<p>This session examines corporate practices that can help museums ensure inclusive design is a sustainable practice that decreasingly relies on external expertise. Topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contracting - Project Management - Advisory and Working Groups - Various tactics and protocols for staff engagement, shared ownership, and empowerment. - Facilitated discussion (and Q&A) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An understanding of the importance of integrating inclusive design across core museum practices and administrative processes. • An understanding of the considerations for incorporating inclusive design considerations into procurement, RFP development, and contracting. • A preliminary understanding of tactics to effectively apply inclusive design in project management (including the establishment of milestones, deliverables, collaboration with accessibility partners), and establishing metrics for evaluation. • An understanding of the need for inclusive design to be formalized through organization policies to ensure accountability over time. • A developing understanding of the language used to communicate about the organization’s inclusive design practices and goals among internal and external stakeholders. • Knowledge of an approach to establishing internal and external advisory groups that can inform ongoing inclusive design strategy and priorities. • Knowledge of how to ensure implementation of inclusive design practices are cross-departmental and ongoing including the selection of members to committees and groups, meeting cadence, proposed topics for discussion, reporting structure, member responsibilities, and more.
Activity: Visitor Experience A – Z	Outcomes
<p>Participants are divided into multidisciplinary groups and work through 1 or 2 scenario-based exercises in which they plan inclusively accessible affordances for the outlined scenario – from pre-visit, through on-site event, and then post-visit engagement.</p> <p>Groups document the affordances and various visitor touchpoints developed in response to the scenario.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience considering the entirety of the visitor journey and all its touch points when engaging in a cultural program (event, exhibition, etc.). • Reinforcement of the interconnectedness of the ecosystem of inclusive experience design. • Experience thinking creatively around the development and application of “soft tactics”. • Awareness of the variables that contribute to sustainable, inclusive practice development.
Discussion	Outcomes
<p>This session is intended for senior leadership including executive management and the board to explore the requirements and benefits of achieving a fully inclusively designed environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informed senior decision making.

This is an informal discussion where example use cases from other organizations are shared and where executive management are encouraged to bring forward perceived challenges and constraints.	
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After completing 12 workshops with PAC, NMMA staff will apply what they have learned. They will start by producing visual descriptions to support NMMA's Art Design Chicago exhibition which will be on display March through August 2024. The Art Design Chicago exhibition research and development was the impetus of this accessibility project.

At the conclusion of the 12 workshops, NMMA will also develop an Inclusive Design Advisory Group that includes Latino representatives as a vector intersecting with disability and identity. The advisory board of approximately 6 people will meet twice a year, be compensated for their time, and provide essential insight to the NMMA team.

The project will also include development of an Inclusive Design Roadmap Process. Over the course of the project, beginning after workshops, PAC will help facilitate NMMA filling out a tool to map necessary accessibility and inclusive design tasks against a sequence distributed across the whole organization, providing actionable next steps. Through the Roadmap, NMMA will mitigate the risk of not following through with its work around accessibility after grant period ends.

PROJECT RESULTS

This project will build capacity related to inclusive design and accessibility practices across all aspects of the Museum with an emphasis on blind or low vision visitors. This will expand on NMMA's past work to create an experience that is accessible to all, regardless of any barriers our visitors face. Specifically for blind and low-vision visitors, this project will result in a method that enables this audience to engage with the Mexican art and culture presented by NMMA.

NMMA will work with Prime Access Consulting (PAC) on a series of 12 staff workshops, and develop an Inclusive Design Advisory Group, an Inclusive Design Working Group and an Inclusive Design Roadmap for NMMA. The Inclusive Design Roadmap will surface specific products NMMA will generate to reach our target audience, and we intend for one of those to be visual descriptions to accompany NMMA's Art Design Chicago exhibition in 2024.

To sustain the benefits of this project, the Inclusive Design Advisory Group and Working Group will meet at least twice a year to check in on progress against the roadmap. We anticipate that Roadmap will suggest future projects for which NMMA will seek additional funding. Most importantly, NMMA staff will have the knowledge, confidence and awareness to truly work toward Arte for All.

National Museum of Mexican Art - Schedule of Completion for Arte for All: Accessibility at NMMA														
PROJECT YEAR		Year 1 (September 2023 to August 2024)												
Month	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug		
Inclusive Design Workshops														
Planning	█													
Worksops				█										
Visual Descriptions Development														
Inclusive Design Advisory Group						█								
Advisory Group Planning/Recruiting						█								
Advisory Group							█						█	
Inclusive Deisign Working Group	█													
Inclusive Design Road Map Development						█								
Coaching	█													
PROJECT YEAR		Year 2 (September 2024 - August 2025)												
Month	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug		
Inclusive Design Advisory Group														
Inclusive Deisign Working Group	█													
Inclusive Design Road Map														
Inclusive Design Road Map Development	█													
Inclusive Design Roa Map Completion												█		
Coaching	█													