



## National Leadership Grants - Museums

Sample Application MG-253439-OMS-23

### Museum Hue

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|-------------------------|-----------|
| Amount awarded by IMLS: | \$545,896 |
| Amount of cost share:   | \$545,896 |

Museum Hue will develop and launch a digital platform dedicated to museums founded and led by culturally specific communities in the United States. Museum professionals across the field will be engaged in the creation of the platform as advisory committee members and focus group interviewees. Project activities will include holding listening sessions and a town hall, distributing surveys to entities in the northeast region, creation of an online directory and interactive map, and beta testing the website. The project will result in the development of an online platform for culturally-specific museums allowing them to garner more support, while simultaneously providing the larger museum field to leverage the best practices and expertise of these institutions in diversity, equity, access, inclusion, and community engagement. The broader public will also benefit by accessing the digital platform for free to explore culturally-specific institutions locally and across the country.

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.



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## Museum Hue Proposal Narrative

Museum Hue (MHue) is seeking \$750,000 from IMLS National Leadership Grant over 3 years to develop a digital platform dedicated to the critical exploration of museums founded and led by Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC) in the US. Entitled **HueMuseums National**, this platform centers BIPOC museums, often referred to as culturally-specific, as models for community-centered approaches versus the traditional collection-centered approach magnified in mainstream museums.

The proposed project, HueMuseums National, addresses the IMLS Goal 1: Advance the museum field's ability to empower people of all ages and backgrounds through experiential and cross-disciplinary learning and discovery. Specifically, our efforts work towards Objective 1.1: Support the development, implementation, and dissemination of model programs that facilitate adoption by museums across the field.

### **Project Justification**

With the current focus on DEAI and community engagement methodology in the larger museum field, MHue is seeking to position BIPOC-founded and led museums, also known as culturally-specific institutions, as long-standing leaders in these priorities and practices.

There are over 150 museums created and led by BIPOC in the United States today. These culturally-specific museums create a dedicated space and platform for art, history, and culture that centers communities of color. These museums are widely-differing yet collectively-united in their visions to bolster greater BIPOC representation in arts, culture, and history. Despite their indelible links to the rich and poignant cultures found across the US, as of today, there are no existing online resources that encompass the history, geographic location, and significance of these critical institutions. This has left a major gap in opportunities for these cultural institutions to participate in the national museum discourse at conferences or to be included in university curriculum and lectures. HueMuseums National seeks to remedy this by raising awareness of these cultural institutions through an online database while simultaneously building a stronger network among them.

The importance of HueMuseums National project (along with MHue's two other, more localized, HueArts database projects) is clear—there is currently no comprehensive resource on the many existing BIPOC museums that exist across the country. Efforts have been made, by the Association of African American Museums and the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums who have developed action plans and surveys to help increase the visibility and viability of the museums in their networks, but gaps in the data remain. This lack of information, coupled with stark and persistent inequities in funding for BIPOC organizations, perpetuates generational racial inequities in access to the arts and in support of BIPOC artists.



An inclusive process to define and map the nation’s BIPOC museum ecosystem will serve as a foundational tool for furthering equity and racial justice in our country. This process will also serve as a valuable tool to inform and encourage a variety of funders as well as cultural entities, workers and supporters to understand and appreciate the full landscape of arts and culture assets outside of the prevalent white-centered institutions; thus, enabling the adoption of intentional and targeted strategies to support the long-term stability and sustainability of BIPOC culture.

Also, within the digital space, there needs to be greater equity and accessibility of museum content. HueMuseums National will complement other platforms like Smarthistory, which is one of the most trusted online resources for the study of art history. They mostly center the art and pedagogy of PWI museums. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many BIPOC museums didn’t receive “promotion” from credible sites like Smarthistory. Because of this, many lagged behind and didn’t get as much visibility. This was also due to capacity constraints and lack of adequate funding.

The shortage of readily available information online about BIPOC arts entities is itself a product of structural racism. Through our varied digital database projects, MHue aims to begin to undo some of the damage caused by long-term structural and institutional neglect of these arts and cultural organizations and their communities by collectively strengthening their presence in and accessibility to the general public.

HueMuseums National builds on two other successful database projects created by MHue: [HueArts NYC](#), which highlights over 400 BIPOC -founded and -led arts entities to contextualize a larger spectrum of the city’s arts community and cultural landscape; and **HueArts NYS**, which will feature close to 150 arts entities across New York State (outside of the 5 boroughs of NYC).

Launched in February 2022, **HueArts NYC** is an online platform offering an interactive map, directory, report, and website that provides a rich and living visual and textual record of BIPOC-centered arts and cultural organizations in New York City. The platform launch included an action item, garnering hundreds of signatures on a public letter to NYC’s Mayor Eric Adams that offered research findings and recommendations with clear action steps rooted in the accompanying “[Brown Paper Report](#)” that would ensure that all of New York City’s arts and cultural assets are included in his cultural vision for the city.

Created throughout the height of the pandemic, HueArts NYC was funded by NYC’s Department of Cultural Affairs in partnership with Mellon Foundation and Ford Foundation. MHue created it in collaboration with:



- **The Laundromat Project**—an arts organization that advances artists and neighbors as change agents in their own communities; and
- **Hester Street**—an urban planning, design, and community development nonprofit working so that neighborhoods are shaped by their people.

Each organizational partner brought their unique abilities and resources to this project and developed a thoughtful, deliberately inclusive process that continues to engage collaborators from across the city, with a focus on reaching cultural entities that tend to be overlooked by arts funders.

Since launching, the HueArts NYC website has had over 6,000 visitors, with over 1,000 visits to the important “Brown Paper Report” page. We know this resource has begun to achieve its goal of raising awareness for the included entities, as many people are utilizing this data to find out more about the arts entities to either visit, collaborate with, or support monetarily. Micaela Martegani, Director & Founder of [More Art](#), had this to say on the completed HueArts NYC project: *“The map is amazing... What a resource! We will be accessing it constantly when looking for collaborations, there are many organizations on there I did not know about! It is a tremendous effort, and everyone here is so grateful for it and humbled by its magnitude.”* We know that funders and policymakers have also utilized the site to learn how to best advocate for the survival of these venerable sites. For example, Gonzalo Casals, former Commissioner of NYC’s Dept. of Cultural Affairs and funder for the project, has contacted us directly to tell us how useful this resource is in his current role as the Senior Research and Policy Fellow at Mellon Foundation.

Growing from HueArts NYC and slated to launch in March 2023, **HueArts NYS** is being developed by MHue with continued collaboration with Hester Street. This expanded state-wide project, funded by the New York State Council on the Arts through an invited partnership grant opportunity, will include a digital map, directory, and report. Development of this project has led to MHue’s current community-engaged survey process that will be utilized in the HueMuseums National project.

HueMuseums National will provide an unprecedented resource that will markedly impact two primary audiences—the featured BIPOC museums themselves and the larger museum field. Additional beneficiaries include the broader public, who can access the HueMuseums National digital platform for free and explore culturally-specific institutions locally and across the country.

Our target group and those who will benefit the most (but not exclusively) are Museum Hue’s 400+ institutional members that consist of predominantly white institutions (PWI) and BIPOC museums across the US. These arts and cultural institutions utilize MHue as a resource for ways to increase knowledge about racial equity, including many PWI’s interested in increasing



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DEAI efforts within their institutions. They look to MHue for professional development opportunities, educational experiences, and supplemental materials that provide guidance for their leadership and staff. The institutional members will greatly benefit from the immersive content in the online database, illustrating ways that BIPOC museums have created a consistent platform and an authentic voice for people of color, as well as broadened public knowledge and understanding of their art, history, and culture.

Culturally-specific institutions have been essential for people of color to have agency and opportunities tell their own stories. Many of these museums (created in the 1960s and 1970s) used the best practices of the time—e.g. in collections care, scholarship, museum operation, etc—to gain legitimacy and agency. Their work in developing museum professionals of color and giving them opportunities in the field has made them leaders in DEAI. In addition, their community-centered practices make meaningful connections between their constituencies' experiences and their cultural and community offerings, which exemplify DEAI values. These institutions were founded with DEAI in mind from the start before the ubiquitous acronym existed. Often left out of the critical dialogue around DEAI, MHue seeks to magnify the practices of these institutions and encourage the larger field to recognize and learn from BIPOC museums as role models and leaders in the changes that need to be made across the museum field.

As mentioned, museums, in recognizing their importance as the culture-bearers of today, are increasingly focused on ensuring that they operate with clear and effective DEAI values. BIPOC museums are often left out of critical dialogue, MHue seeks to magnify the practices of these institutions and encourage the larger field to recognize and prioritize them as leaders in DEAI. Centering culturally-specific museums will help: broaden public knowledge of art, history, and culture by countering historical omissions, misconceptions, and problematic depictions of their communities; showcase vast and important artistic practices and cultural contributions often absent from predominantly white museum narratives; and illuminate and acknowledge long-standing issues of economic and educational inequality, racial divides, and other issues faced in their communities.

Museum professionals across the field from PWI's to BIPOC museums will be engaged in the creation of the HueMuseums National website as advisory committee members and focus group interviews. The project will listen and respond to stakeholders to learn how this new platform can best support their work and what they would like to learn most. A survey will be created so that we can also quantify their thoughts about the project and it will be built into the site for continuous real-time feedback and ongoing adjustments to be made. In every aspect of the project, we seek to encourage the museum field to recognize and prioritize culturally-specific museums as leaders in DEAI.



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The culturally-specific institutions featured in the final project will be essential to the research and development of the HueMuseums National project outcomes. Detailed in the “Project Work Plan” below, the project includes consistent participation from select members of each BIPOC institution featured in the database. Their inclusion in the development of the database and reports is invaluable and a requirement for creating a final project that is ethical and truly reflective of the voices, truths, and needs of these museums.

In terms of benefits, a primary purpose of the project is to raise awareness and understanding of the importance of BIPOC museums, resulting in increased support (financially and attendance-wise) for their practices and programs. Additionally, by having access to a comprehensive map and database, these institutions will be able to expand and strengthen their network with other BIPOC museums. This could lead to new and impactful partnerships, knowledge exchanges, and resource sharing, ultimately benefiting culturally-specific institutions collectively and in multiple ways over the long term.

MHue recognizes a combination of diverse methods and tactics need to be utilized to increase racial equity in the museum field and create lasting change. The HueMuseums National project will complement the work of American Alliance Museums and other DEAI initiatives, by providing additional approaches to representation, community engagement, and leadership pipelines for future generations of museum professionals of color.

By consolidating the data on culturally-specific museums throughout the country, HueMuseums National will provide all museums with multifaceted resources and clear guidance toward best practices in DEAI and community engagement. This project expands nationally on the existing and ongoing research MHue is conducting on the impact of a broad range of arts entities founded and led by BIPOC in New York. Through our thorough data collection processes, we have developed a better understanding of the landscape within which culturally-specific museums operate and how they help their communities. Beyond just arts programming, our work has revealed how BIPOC institutions have been instrumental in building and celebrating cultures, helping sustain communities during crises, and acting as advocates for social issues stemming from systemic racism and other social injustices.

### Project Work Plan

The labor-intensive and community-engaged process by which MHue co-creates all our databases centers around an Advisory Committee—a group of individuals that represent different geographic locations, disciplines, identities, and ages—to inform the project. This committee meets 4-6 times throughout the duration of the project to inform both the data collection tools and the final outputs. Additional data collection is done via:



- Listening Sessions—an opportunity for leaders across the field to come together to speak about their experiences, challenges, resources, and hopes for the future (30+ sessions per project).
- Focus Groups—with invited groups of BIPOC arts participants and culture leaders to garner additional information (3-5 per project).
- Town Halls—virtual events where the greater public is invited to share their thoughts, priorities, and suggestions (1 per project).
- Community Surveys—a critical tool dispersed to each entity included in the region being mapped; curated specifically and intentionally to garner a wide range of data about the state of BIPOC arts and culture in the areas addressed. MHue offers a stipend to incentivize participation in the survey (stipends vary depending on scope of the project).
- Development and Pilot Beta Testing of the final project website - the advisory committee and those a part of the focus groups will have an opportunity to engage with the website.

This process is being applied to the HueArts NYS and HueMuseum National projects, with scalable adaptations made as needed.

Beginning in 2023, MHue will enter the data-driven research phase of HueMuseums National with a focus on the NE Region of the country, namely: Maine, New York, New Jersey, Vermont, Delaware, Massachusetts, Maryland, Washington D.C., Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania. MHue recognizes the importance of taking our time and being intentional about, and culturally sensitive in, our engagement with the varied regions of our nation. Therefore, we see the full-scale national project as a long-term goal, with geographically specific region roll-outs to occur every 2-3 years.

The first step of the data-driven research phase is thorough outreach to known BIPOC museums in the NE. We will ask those identified for additional recommendations to ensure all existing culturally-specific institutions are included in the initial research. Then MHue will commence listening sessions, the creation of the Advisory Committee, develop the survey tool, and begin organizing data. A focus of the survey and structured data collection will be to learn about and understand the critical ways in which culturally-specific museums are models for community-centered approaches as well as DEAI practices.

This project will be planned and implemented primarily by Museum Hue staff, who will dedicate their time and expertise to this project. Critical support will also be provided by the Association of African American Museums; possibly the Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries and Museums; and TimeLooper, a global experience design firm that specializes in immersive storytelling. TimeLooper's extensive knowledge in virtual experience development marries a deep understanding of customer experience, digital interpretive media, and immersive technology development.



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A potential challenge of this project is ensuring that the final platform can be sustained and successfully managed. MHue will address this by building awareness using our network of museums, as well as our e-newsletters and social media platforms. We will also create regular original content for the website, and utilize varied marketing strategies to reach audiences outside our existing network. MHue will serve as the vehicle to create digital storytelling and content-driven launch campaigns for the site, highlighting unique opportunities for users to hear first-hand from some of the most innovative, transformative practices taking place in these museums.

Another challenge relating to sustainability will require a plan to maintain the site and sourcing additional funding to make iterative improvements to the site after launch. Maintenance of the site is essential to keep it relevant and in step with what users search for and want to know from the database and the museums it promotes. MHue will analyze data from a variety of sources including website traffic with geo markers, and the number of unique visitors to the site, among others. This data will help us understand what different segments of our target audiences—museum professionals, researchers, and the general public—are viewing across the country.

A critical piece of the success of this project will be the network of museums that grows out of engaging in the creation of the platform. The site will be tested by museum professionals and others with a vested interest in its success and promoted directly to those most likely to not only use the platform but promote it to their students and communities. These relationships will make it easier to find promotional opportunities for the site such as on university websites, newsletters from professional organizations like the American Alliance of Museums, and other industry-specific websites and social media accounts.

Other income sources for the project include annual membership fees and renewals of current multi-year grants from the Mellon Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Ford Foundation. Always seeking to expand our support, MHue is also in development with several new funding sources, with proposals out to The Tides Foundation, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Wallace Foundation, and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

### Project Results

The final HueMuseums National project will be a nationwide database that showcases museums focused on, and created by, BIPOC communities. Growing from other MHue created databases projects: HueArts NYC and HueArts NYS, HueMuseums National will result in an easily accessible online platform that will allow users, including philanthropists, peer institutions, and the larger museum field, as well as museum-goers, to encounter the diversity and ingenuity of the nation's BIPOC museums in new ways. The culminating online resource will offer tools to



inform and encourage funders to understand the full landscape of arts and culture assets across the country, thus enabling the adoption of intentional and targeted strategies to support the long-term stability and sustainability of BIPOC arts and culture. The project will also provide context for their cultural significance so as to bring them to the forefront of the larger museum field. In addition to the functionality of this work as a tool, we hope this project leads to increased cooperation and solidarity amongst BIPOC museums themselves as they are affirmed as an important part of the national arts and culture field.

With the success of HueArts NYC and the forthcoming launch of HueArts NYS, MHue is taking the lessons learned and best practices of the city and state-wide projects to devise a national-scale process of data collection and resource development, resulting in a successful and impactful HueMuseums National project.

Through varied data collection and listening practices, MHue will work with various partners to analyze BIPOC museums' presence, practice, demographics, and social factors. By identifying variances within the landscape of these institutions, we will strengthen this project and platform. Having this data compiled and visualized is critical to understand their practices and needs. It provides a clearer lens to their unique contributions and challenges faced throughout the country.

Final outcomes of the HueMuseums National project include the development of an online platform for BIPOC culturally-specific museums with an array of resources, including reports, case studies, tool kits, videos, articles, blog posts, and conference presentations. The site will provide centralized access to these museums, as well as context for their cultural significance. In addition, a digital campaign will introduce their pedagogy, exhibitions, collections, services, and other programs to garner greater support for their practice.

# HueMuseums National: Schedule of Completion

## 2023-2024 Schedule of completion for NE Region of the U.S.

| PHASE   | Pre-Grant Activity |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
|---|--------------------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|--|
|   | 2023               |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     | 2024 |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
|   | Feb                | March | April | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb  | March | April | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |  |
| <b>Research and Data-Collection:</b>  |                    |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
| <b>Outcome Development: co-create map and directory</b>   |                    |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
| <b>Final Report: develop &amp; complete report of BIPOC museums in the NE in partnership with Slover Linett and Yancey Consulting</b> |                    |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
| <b>Public Release: online directory, interactive map, and corresponding report; along with Public convening.</b>                      |                    |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
| <b>Initial Maintenance: troubleshooting, editing, and feedback from constituents.</b>   |                    |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |
| <b>Develop Online Platform: Build the online platform to spotlight BIPOC museums in NE region</b>                                     |                    |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |  |

## 2025-2026 Schedule of completion for NE Region of the U.S.

| PHASE   | 2025 |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     | 2026 |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |
|---|------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|-------|-------|-----|------|------|-----|--|--|
|   | Feb  | March | April | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan | Feb  | March | April | May | June | July | Aug |  |  |
| <b>Develop Online Platform: Build the online platform to spotlight BIPOC museums in NE region</b>                 |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |
| <b>Internal Launch: first iteration of the platform is shared with Advisory Committee and Focus Groups</b>        |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |
| <b>E-marketing Campaign: sharing new platform with BIPOC cultural institutions and leaders across the country</b> |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |
| <b>Public Release: full platform with comprehensive content made public</b>                                       |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |
| <b>Analyze Success of the initial platform launch</b>   |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |
| <b>Strategize next steps to continue monitoring and updating the new online platform and related tools</b>        |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |     |      |       |       |     |      |      |     |  |  |