RESEARCH REPORT

Research to Inform the American Latino History and Culture Program

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URBAN INSTITUTE

INSTITUTE *of* Museum *and* Library SERVICES

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The mission of IMLS is to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. The agency carries out its charge as it adapts to meet the changing needs of our nation's museums and libraries and their communities. IMLS's mission is essential to helping these institutions navigate change and continue to improve their services. IMLS envisions a nation where individuals and communities have access to museums and libraries to learn from and be inspired by the trusted information, ideas, and stories they contain about our diverse natural and cultural heritage.

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Introduction

Supporting American Latino institutions across the United States is vital to preserving and promoting American Latino life, art, history, and culture.[1] As the largest and second-fastest-growing ethnic minority in the United States, American Latinos influence music, literature, art, and traditions for generations of families and communities. American Latino museums play an integral role in preserving this diverse culture by providing opportunities for people to work, enjoy, create, share, and learn about American Latino experiences. Recognizing this important role, in 2020 Congress enacted legislation to establish a new American Latino History and Culture (ALHC) program at the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The ALHC program was authorized as part of the National Museum of the American Latino Act (Public Law 116-260), after 15 years of bipartisan efforts by American Latino leaders.

The ALHC program will use grantmaking to build the capacity of American Latino museums and educational organizations to promote the study and appreciation of American Latino life, art, history, culture, and their impact on US society. Accordingly, it aims to strengthen, sustain, and grow the field by nurturing museum professionals, expanding institutional capacity, and increasing access to American Latino museums and archival collections at Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) nationwide.

From September 2022 to December 2023 IMLS contracted with the nonprofit Urban Institute to conduct field research and planning activities to inform development of the ALHC program. For this work, Urban engaged a large, multidisciplinary team of predominantly American Latino researchers, consulted with two museum professionals who were former chairs of the Latino Network of the American Alliance of Museums, and integrated broad input from American Latino museum collaborators, potential applicants, and funders. Urban's team focused on five objectives: inform the design of the ALHC program to reflect cultural literacy about American Latino institutions and the communities they serve; identify the potential universe of relevant cultural institutions and organizations; develop recommended priorities for IMLS in implementing the ALHC program to build applicant capacity and assets and address needs; clarify how IMLS can work with similar federal programs to support, expand, and sustain the ALHC program's growth; and support program performance measurement and evaluation. These objectives evolved into research questions that frame the content of this report (see technical appendix B for objectives, questions, and data sources).

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[1] We use the term "American Latino" throughout in keeping with ALHC legislation and with reference to all diverse people of Spanish and/or Latin American origin in the United States and the museums that support them.

Our work included secondary and primary mixed-methods research. Secondary research activities included an extensive review of English, Spanish, and Portuguese literature and an environmental scan to map the American Latino museum field. Primary research included two national, community listening sessions, an online survey fielded in English and Spanish, and multiple interviews in English and Spanish. Research participants included potential applicants to the ALHC program (also referred to as "stakeholders"), collaborators in the American Latino museum field (such as associations and organizations that might partner with future applicants), and governmental and private funders in the American Latino museum space. Collectively, Urban's field research involved the following:

- a review of more than 250 pieces of literature in English, Spanish, and Portuguese

- an environmental scan of 30 directories and databases to map the American Latino museum field

- two community listening sessions, one in English and one in Spanish, with 49 total attendees

- an online survey in English and Spanish that received 74 responses from potential ALHC program applicants

- interviews in English and Spanish with 40 stakeholders, collaborators, and funders

See technical appendix C for more details about Urban's research methodology.

In this report, we summarize findings from these activities (additional details are available in technical appendix D). Findings are organized into four sections: understanding the American Latino museum field, assessing funding experiences of American Latino museums, growing the capacity of American Latino museums, and implementing the American Latino History and Culture program. In these sections, we present field research results in response to guiding research questions, shown as headers. Throughout, we provide relevant citations to the literature, quotations from participants, and descriptive statistics from the survey, and we note whether findings reflect perspectives of ALHC program stakeholders (potential applicants), collaborators, and/or funders. We also integrate recommendations to IMLS throughout the report to inform the design of the ALHC program based on the findings. Several themes repeatedly emerge, elevating the need for the ALHC program to support diversity, inclusion, community, equity, collaboration, authenticity, transparency, accessibility, sustainability, and impact for American Latino museums across the United States.

Understanding the American Latino Museum Field

This first section of the report's findings focuses on understanding the American Latino museum field by addressing research questions regarding diverse characteristics of American Latino experiences and museums, criteria relevant to defining an American Latino museum for the ALHC program, and the estimated current universe of ALHC program stakeholders.

What Are the Diverse Characteristics of the American Latino Experience?

The Latin American diaspora in the United States includes people who share Spanish and/or Latin American roots yet have diverse ethnic, racial, and national identities. American Latino people include those whose ethnicities trace to Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, or other Spanish-speaking countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela. They can also include people in the United States who self-identify as American Latino and whose origins trace to Portuguese-speaking countries, such as Brazil or Portugal, or to Caribbean countries, Belize, or the Philippines (Passel and Krogstad 2023).[2] As an interviewed funder shared,

> We're such a diverse community…We have people whose families have been in the territory known as US for centuries and those who are first and second generation. All have different experiences based on what part of the country we are in, based on the countries our families are from, and we all have different cultural heritages. We are both the colonized and the colonizer. Understanding that and wrestling with that identity and finding ways to…celebrate the beauty of those differences is important.

People with American Latino ethnicity may identify their race as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Black or African American, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, white, and/or multiracial

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[2] Olimpia Gala Martinelli, "A ascensão da arte latino-americana," *Artmajeur*, June 19, 2022, https://www.artmajeur.com/pt/magazine/5-historia-da-arte/a-ascensao-da-arte-latino-americana/331669; N. Acevedo, E. Flores, and S. D. Gamboa, "Who's Latino? Amid growing numbers the definition is expanding," NBC News, September 15, 2022, https://www.nbcnews.com/specials/who-s-latino-amid-growing-numbers-the-definition-is-expanding/index.html.

and often span a range of national origins (Ocampo 2020).[3] On the 2020 Census, American Latino people were for the first time also able to identify both their ethnicity and their race as American Latino, and this option was the most frequently selected single-race group (it was selected by 26 million people). Furthermore, the number of American Latinos identifying as multiracial is growing, having increased from 3 million in 2010 to more than 20 million in 2020.[4]

According to the 2020 Census, American Latinos account for 19 percent of the US population (63 million people) and represent the largest and second-fastest-growing ethnic minority in the United States (Jones et al. 2021).[5] By the year 2060, the American Latino population is expected to grow to more than 111 million people. This growth is reflected in American Latino contributions to the US economy, with the economic output of American Latinos reaching $2.8 trillion in 2020 (Hamilton et al. 2022). As Hamilton and coauthors (2022, 7) write, "Latinos are both drivers of economic growth for the U.S. economy and also a source of resilience that benefits all Americans."

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program should embrace diversity in American Latino art, history, and culture, and expect growth in the American Latino museum field.**

Despite this rapid growth in the American Latino population, many American Latino communities continue to need economic and social supports, particularly communities that have historically been the most underresourced in the United States (Carmona 2023; UnidosUS 2022).[6] These are often American

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[3] G. López and A. Gonzalez-Barrera, "Afro-Latino: A deeply rooted identity among U.S. Hispanics," Pew Research Center, March 1, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/03/01/afro-latino-a-deeply-rooted-identity-among-u-s-hispanics/; A. Menchaca, B. Pratt, E. Jensen, and N. Jones, "Examining the racial and ethnic diversity of adults and children," Within Census Blogs, US Census Bureau, May 22, 2023, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2023/05/racial-ethnic-diversity-adults-children.html.

[4] J. Manuel Krogstad, J. S. Passel., M. Moslimani, and L. Noe-Bustamente, "Key facts about U.S. Latinos for National Hispanic Heritage Month," Pew Research Center, September 22, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/09/23/key-facts-about-u-s-latinos-for-national-hispanic-heritage-month/.

[5] M. H. Lopez, J. M. Krogstad, and J. S. Passel, "Who is Hispanic?" Pew Research Center, September 5, 2023, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/09/05/who-is-hispanic/.

[6] L. Goodman and J. Zhu, "The number of Hispanic households will skyrocket by 2040. How can the housing industry support their needs?" *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, February 25, 2021, https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/number-hispanic-households-will-skyrocket-2040-how-can-housing-industry-support-their-needs; T. Hill, A. Zinn, and A. Mehrotra, "How can we advance Latino homeownership and housing stability?" *Urban Wire* (blog), Urban Institute, June 12, 2023, https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/how-can-we-advance-latino-homeownership-and-housing-stability; J. McCormack, "Latino 'excess deaths' far exceed initial estimates during COVID-19 pandemic," Salud America, October 20, 2021, https://salud-america.org/latino-excess-deaths-far-exceed-initial-estimates-during-covid-19-pandemic/.

Latinos who recently immigrated, who do not speak English fluently (making education and employment more challenging), and who lack strong familial networks in the United States (Armet 2022; Hanson, Orrenius, and Zavodny 2023; Stein, Garibay, and Wilson 2008).[7]

With such diverse origins, American Latinos' historical experiences have been complex, varied, and layered with regard to immigration and assimilation, colonization and slavery, social and economic privilege, and racism and discrimination (Clealand 2022; Lopez, Krogstad, and Passel 2023; Muñoz and Villanueva 2022). As an interviewed collaborator described, American Latinos

> are incredibly complex. Many of us probably started with a story of having left but having learned so much and worked really hard to get there. And I want all of us to be represented. Those of us who have come here on Fulbright scholarships are now general surgeons. Those who are arriving and crossed the border yesterday because of feelings of persecution and political oppression in our own country. We are incredibly diverse and contributing to [the] economy.

Experiences have differed based on the countries American Latinos have emigrated from; on demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, income, and education; and on other factors, such as access to health care, housing, and social networks. Yet despite adversities, generations of American Latinos have made significant accomplishments and progress in the United States in the arts, sciences, business, and culture. Collectively, American Latinos have much to be proud of and many contributions to share across US life, art, history, and culture.

How Should These Characteristics Inform Understanding of an American Latino Museum?

Many American Latino museums started from grassroots community-driven efforts that contribute to dialogue reimagining what a museum is and suggest that the criteria used by IMLS may need to be broadened. The history of one of the oldest American Latino museums, El Museo del Barrio, serves as example. Although the museum now occupies permanent, professionally operated space, it began in 1969 after a coalition of Puerto Rican working artists, educators, and volunteers noted that mainstream

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[7] "Interesting Insights into Latino Audiences," CALTA21, accessed December 26, 2023, http://calta21.org/2013/05/22/interesting-insights-into-latino-audiences/; S. Schumacher, L. Hamel, S. Artiga, D. Pillai, A. Kirzinger, A. Kearney, M. Presiado, A. Gonzalez-Barrera, and M. Brodie, "Understanding the U.S. Immigrant Experience: The 2023 KFF/LA Times Survey of Immigrants," KFF, September 17, 2023, https://www.kff.org/report-section/understanding-the-u-s-immigrant-experience-the-2023-kff-la-times-survey-of-immigrants-findings/.

museums largely ignored American Latino artists (Ruffins 2022).[8] For years, the museum operated with no permanent space as its founders organized exhibitions in libraries, schools, and small galleries (Ruffins 2022, 112). A stakeholder interviewed from another museum described a similar experience about their museum's origins: "At that time we didn't have a space. The space of the museum was the community…We would do programming at the schools, at [coffee shops], at libraries, at [bookstores]." Several interviewees indicated that, in many cases, American Latino museums occupied these spaces because they lacked financial and capacity resources to develop more formal museum institutions, despite a desire to fill gaps in community cultural services.

The IMLS criteria regarding museum eligibility for funding[9] were summarized for listening-session attendees as including: use of professional staff; organization on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes; owning or using tangible objects, either animate or inanimate; caring for these objects; and exhibiting these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that are owned or operated. Several of these criteria were cited as potentially problematic by listening-session participants and interviewed stakeholders with regard to American Latino museums. These potentially problematic criteria included the following: that the institution "uses a professional staff" (many American Latino museums are run by parttime staff and volunteers); that it is "organized on a permanent basis" (American Latino museums may offer programming through community centers, libraries, and schools, and not yet occupy permanent spaces); that it "owns" and "cares for" a collection (American Latino museums may not own collections or have the resources and equipment to preserve and store items from collections, and as one listening-session stakeholder said, "Sometimes organizations exhibit and utilize collections as opposed to actually owning the collections"); and that it uses "facilities that it owns or operates" (American Latino museums may not yet own, rent, or operate from permanent spaces). Survey respondents provided similar input when asked how IMLS can ensure the ALHC program effectively supports American Latino museums; one respondent wrote that IMLS should "have an open mind about what constitutes a nonprofit Latino history and culture organization—they may not be called museums, [and] they may be grassroots, community spaces without much infrastructure."

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8   "Mission," El Museo del Barrio, accessed December 26, 2023, https://www.elmuseo.org/about/history-mission/.

9   "Eligibility Criteria," Institute of Museum and Library Services, accessed December 26, 2023, https://www.imls.gov/grants/apply-grant/eligibility-criteria.

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program should incorporate flexibility in eligibility criteria to acknowledge the varying operational structures of American Latino museums, many of which occupy community spaces.**

One additional criterion—not present in the IMLS eligibility criteria—was also mentioned by many stakeholders, collaborators, and funders in this study: that American Latino museums should have authentic engagement with the American Latino communities they serve (for example, see Garibay, Lannes, and Gonzalez 2017). As one listening-session stakeholder stated, "Latino organizations…when they have been active in their communities…they have a history of exhibiting, collecting, [and] organizing exhibitions and programs [that] are relevant to that community. And also, the community recognizes them as such. So I think IMLS needs to look at both how the organizations self-identify and how does the community identify them as well…dual validation." Notably, the spirit of this criterion appears in the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Cultural and Community Resilience grant program (described more later): the application for that program includes questions on how applicants will ensure their work is culturally appropriate and includes representation from the relevant communities.

In the American Latino museum sphere and globally, the past century has witnessed evolving definitions of museums that increasingly embrace their role as places to reflect and support diverse community dialogue.[10] An interviewed stakeholder summarized that "museums are increasingly becoming, or there are expectations on them to be, community centers and hubs for not just learning, but respite and community and sort of leading the way as the country gets more diverse and yet more divided." The former Latino Network of the American Alliance of Museums (AAM 2021, 6) similarly described a broader purpose for museums, particularly with regard to engaging American Latino audiences: "We propose that museums actively and intentionally make space for collaboration and co-creation with communities that have been historically excluded from these organizations. Doing so requires that museums recognize and value these communities, and understand that they are not passive audience members, but custodians of a wealth of knowledge and expertise."

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[10] "Museum Definition," International Council of Museums, accessed December 26, 2023, https://icom.museum/en/resources/standards-guidelines/museum-definition/; N. Simon, "Reimagining museums with Latin America leading the way," Museum 2.0, November 20, 2017, https://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2017/11/reimagining-museums-with-latin-america.html.

> **Recommendation: The review process for the ALHC program should assess applicants' levels of engagement and culturally appropriate collaboration with their American Latino community constituents.**

In several listening sessions and interviews with stakeholders, concerns were raised that larger, mainstream organizations may pursue ALHC program funding to the detriment of smaller American Latino museums with longer histories and expertise in supporting American Latino cultural and community offerings. Examples cited were museums that are large enough to host American Latino objects and collections, including those acquired through colonial processes,[11] but that do not present as authentic, American Latino cultural organizations. As one interviewed collaborator shared,

> Latinx institutions have been leading in this field and [it is concerning] when large mainstream institutions don't acknowledge the important work that culturally specific institutions have been doing for decades. They have been supporting Latinx artists from inception…Collaborations sound good in theory, but you need to ensure that work is being properly shared and that Latinx institutions have the ability to shape the discourse, that it's not just a subordinate relationship.

But some of these same voices acknowledged that if mainstream museums were to authentically partner with smaller, American Latino–focused museums in ways that provided equitable standing to each partner in the proposed ALHC project, then that would be an acceptable benefit for all involved.

Following a more specific dialogue, Urban's literature review, environmental scan, and survey results pointed to the importance for IMLS to use the term "museum" to incorporate a broader range of institutions. For example, IMLS's Museum Grants for African American History and Culture funding opportunity—which lists art museums, aquariums, arboretums, and historic houses among other examples (IMLS 2023a)—is just as useful for thinking about the American Latino space. In Urban's environmental scan of the American Latino museum field (described later), the universe of potential ALHC applicants also included cultural centers (35 percent), art museums/centers (26 percent), multipurpose institutions (14 percent), and archives/libraries (2 percent). Definitions of these types are described later.

Collectively, to support the types of museums that potential ALHC applicants might identify with, IMLS's list should be broadened to include cultural centers, art centers, and history centers, as well as archives and archival collections. Furthermore, given that the African American History and Culture

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11 For example, see Isis Davis-Marks, "Brooklyn Museum Returns 1,305 Pre-Hispanic Artifacts to Costa Rica," *Smithsonian Magazine*, July 8, 2021, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/brooklyn-museum-returns-more-1300-objects-costa-rica-180978122/.

(AAHC) program funding opportunity includes historically Black colleges and universities as eligible institutions, it follows that IMLS will want to consider how best to incorporate HSIs into the ALHC program. Given the HSI designation is based on student demographic composition and not institutional supports or programming, IMLS will have to specify what sort of programming would entail HSI eligibility for ALHC funding.

> **Recommendation: Eligible museum types for the ALHC program should include American Latino cultural centers, art centers, and history centers (including historic sites), as well as archives and archival collections that provide public access and programming.**

You have to include cultural centers in this conversation. If not, you know, the program's not gonna be as successful as it really needs to be. —Interviewed collaborator

What Criteria Best Define an American Latino Museum for the ALHC Program?

To clarify the criteria that best define American Latino museums, Urban's team searched the internet to extract the mission statements, values/pillars, and foundational histories of 51 self-identified American Latino museums across the United States, including the US territories, such as Puerto Rico.[12] We then conducted a qualitative review of these statements, values/pillars, and histories to clarify common themes and takeaways, determining that American Latino museums do the following:

- foster public awareness and appreciation of American Latino art, culture, and history via exhibitions, programming, and educational experiences

- document American Latino history, honoring ancestral stories and preserving historically significant land/sites/monuments

- expand and stimulate knowledge on key American Latino historical events, figures, and their influence on US society

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[12] The complete list of these museums is available via Museum Environments at https://museumenvironments.com/latino-museums/.

- promote, integrate, and advance pioneering and emerging American Latino artists

- serve as an interdisciplinary space for community members to gather and organize on American Latino educational activities, art and musical performances, spoken word events, workshops, screenings, and cultural events/festivals

- serve as communal spaces for activism and for community members to advance advocacy agendas on political and social issues impacting American Latino communities

- provide employment opportunities, trainings, and fellowship opportunities to cultivate future American Latino curators, archivists, artists, performers, and museum professionals

The first three characteristics reflect more "universal" criteria of museums, while the final four reflect additional characteristics more specific to American Latino institutions.

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program should fund activities that foster appreciation, document history, promote artists, empower communities, and cultivate professional development of American Latinos.**

As mentioned previously, in listening sessions, participants raised the idea that a two-part approach would be the best way to identify an American Latino organization, recommending that IMLS look at both how museums self-identify and how their surrounding communities identify them. Other stakeholders agreed and noted it is also important to focus on the museum staff who are paid to collect, choose, and weed out what is most relevant to the community, from the institutional perspective. Stakeholders and collaborators both indicated that the model of what it means to be an American Latino museum—and a museum generally—is evolving, and that many museums also define themselves as cultural centers that integrate social and economic empowerment. In addition to this evolving model, museums have new ways to measure success aligned with community empowerment, outreach, and economic empowerment in the community. These findings also emerged in literature Urban reviewed (Acevedo 2015; de Lima 2020; Mieri et al. 2006). At the same time, more traditional museums continue to serve a role providing formal and informal learning and educational opportunities among American Latino families (Acosta and Haden 2022). With these evolving factors in mind, Urban's team set out to map the American Latino museum field.

What Is the Universe of ALHC Program Stakeholders?

To map the universe of potential applicants to the ALHC program, Urban conducted an extensive environmental scan that involved a review of 30 directories and databases of museum association memberships, mission statements, web searching, and federal grant searches. From this scan, we identified 270 active museums that are either institutionally focused or have hosted exhibits on issues of American Latino art, history, and culture. Additionally, there are 571 HSIs of higher education and 401 emerging HSIs in the United States.

The 270 museums in Urban's scan of American Latino museums reflect a range of museum types. We classified museums identified in our scan into three categories: those where the central mission was a focus on American Latino art, history, or culture; those where American Latino art, history, or culture was part of the mission statement but not the sole or exclusive focus; and those that had hosted exhibits on American Latino art, history, or culture (table 1).

TABLE 1

Typology of Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums

Museum characteristics	Count	Percentage of database
Central mission is American Latino	86	32%
American Latino art, history, or culture is *part* of mission	20	7%
Has hosted American Latino exhibits	164	61%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of American Latino museum association memberships, mission statements, web searching, and federal grant searches.
Note: *N*=270.

These 270 museums reflect a final review of this project's database in which we removed museums that, though identified through one of our search methods, have closed. The counts for the first and second categories reflect a multistep search and identification process. But the third category should not be considered a census of *all* museums that have hosted *any* exhibit on American Latino art, history, or culture, as our identification process for these museums did not include an exhaustive search on exhibit history but relied on review of federal grants and identification through discussions with contacts and experts. Similarly, of the 74 museums that responded to Urban's survey, 66 percent self-identified as an American Latino museum, while 34 percent did not; these latter museums would have at least hosted an American Latino exhibit based on Urban's initial searches.

We identified 60 institutions that were affiliated with or part of universities or colleges. Of these, 28 were affiliated with (or part of) HSIs, 25 were affiliated with emerging HSIs, and another 7 were affiliated with universities that were not HSIs or emerging HSIs (table 2). The institutions in our database include only a small share of all identified HSIs and emerging HSIs; this reflects our focus on American Latino *museums*, which not all universities or colleges will have. Furthermore, this does not include all university- or college-affiliated museums that have hosted an exhibit on American Latino art, history, or culture.

TABLE 2

Typology of University- and College-Affiliated Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums

Museum characteristics	HSI	Emerging HSI	Other university	Percentage of database
Total in database	28	25	7	22%
Central mission is American Latino	5	4	0	11%
American Latino is part of mission	1	3	0	20%
Has hosted American Latino exhibits	22	18	7	29%
HSIs and emerging HSIs	571	401	n/a	n/a

Source: Urban Institute analysis. Counts of HSIs and emerging HSIs are from "Hispanic-Serving Institutions," Excelencia in Education, accessed November 30, 2023, https://www.edexcelencia.org/research-policy/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis.
Note: HSI = Hispanic-Serving Institution.

Types of American Latino Museums

Based on our review, we classified American Latino museums into the following seven types, as shown in table 3:

- **Art museums/centers** are characterized by their ability to sustain discussions around creativity, expertise, authority, expression, and contemplation of art (Bautista 2013). For the goals of this project, we focus on art museums that focus on or host exhibitions of art that cover Latino history and culture. A total of 100 museums in the database are classified as art museums.

- **Cultural centers** are often smaller-scale institutions than museums and have a more specific focus on cultural groups.[13] Cultural centers also work closely with the community, providing space to allow groups to define their cultures on public platforms and facilitating the respectful and accurate display of artwork and other items. We identified 51 cultural centers in our dataset.

- **History museums/centers, historic sites, and historical societies** are known for the care and display of items that have historical value. Historical museums and sites are considered museums of culture because these establishments collect and exhibit materials that tell the story of the past and celebrate culture.[14] We have identified 26 of these institutions.

- **Libraries, archives, and university research centers** hold special collections, academic press publications, and public programs and community-based partnerships. Of the 46 libraries, archives, and university research centers in our analysis, 37 are located in universities or colleges.

- **Multipurpose institutions** are those that focus on multiple themes and program areas. We identified 26 of these museums in this search.

- **"Other"** museums in our typology have some other focus. These range from natural history museums and botanical gardens, to science centers, to museums with a specialized focus, such as on sports or music. We identified 21 institutions that fall under this category.

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[13] "The Peopling of New York Final Project," Macaulay Honors College at the City University of New York, accessed November 30, 2023, https://eportfolios.macaulay.cuny.edu/luttonprojects15/music-and-art/art/museums-and-cultural-centers/.

[14] "The Difference between Museums and Historical Societies," Arna Bontemps Museum, January 1, 2023, https://www.arnabontempsmuseum.com/the-differences-between-museums-and-historical-societies/.

TABLE 3
Typology of Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums, by Museum Type

Museum type	American Latino focus: count, percentage of database	Has hosted American Latino exhibits: count, percentage of database	Totals: count, percentage of database
Art museum/center	28, 26%	72, 44%	100, 37%
Cultural center	42, 40%	9, 5%	51, 19%
History museum/center/society	12, 11%	14, 9%	26, 10%
Library/archive/university research center	4, 4%	42, 26%	46, 17%
Multipurpose	12, 11%	14, 9%	26, 10%
Other (specialty)	8, 8%	13, 8%	21, 8%
Totals	106, 100%	164, 100%	270, 100%

Source: Urban Institute analysis.

Recommendation: The ALHC program needs to accommodate the relatively large share of cultural centers in the American Latino museum space and identify how to support these institutions' needs and goals.

American Latino museums are concentrated in the Southwest and West but are located throughout the United States. Museums in Urban's database are most heavily concentrated in the Southwest (over half, or 56 percent), Florida, California, the Mid-Atlantic, and Puerto Rico (figure 1).

FIGURE 1
Locations of Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums
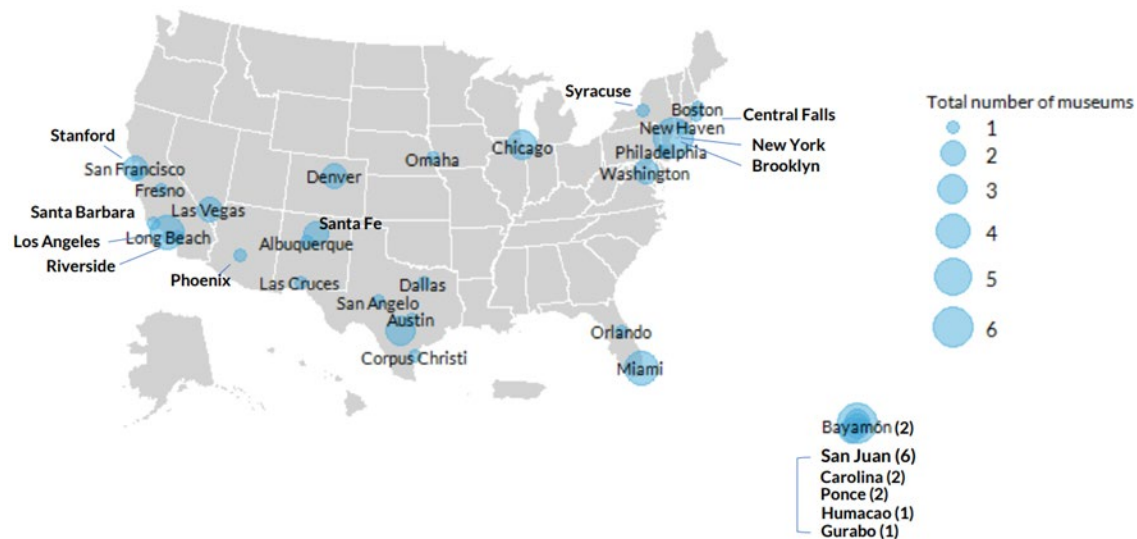
Source: Urban Institute analysis.

The locations of HSIs largely track with those of the museums in our database: the largest numbers are in Arizona, California, Florida, Illinois, New Mexico, New York, Puerto Rico, and Texas (figure 2). Many states in the northern and southern United States have no HSIs.

Number of Hispanic-Serving Institutions by State/Territory

Total number of HSIs
- 1 to 2
- 2 to 4
- 4 to 20
- 20 to 174
- No HSIs
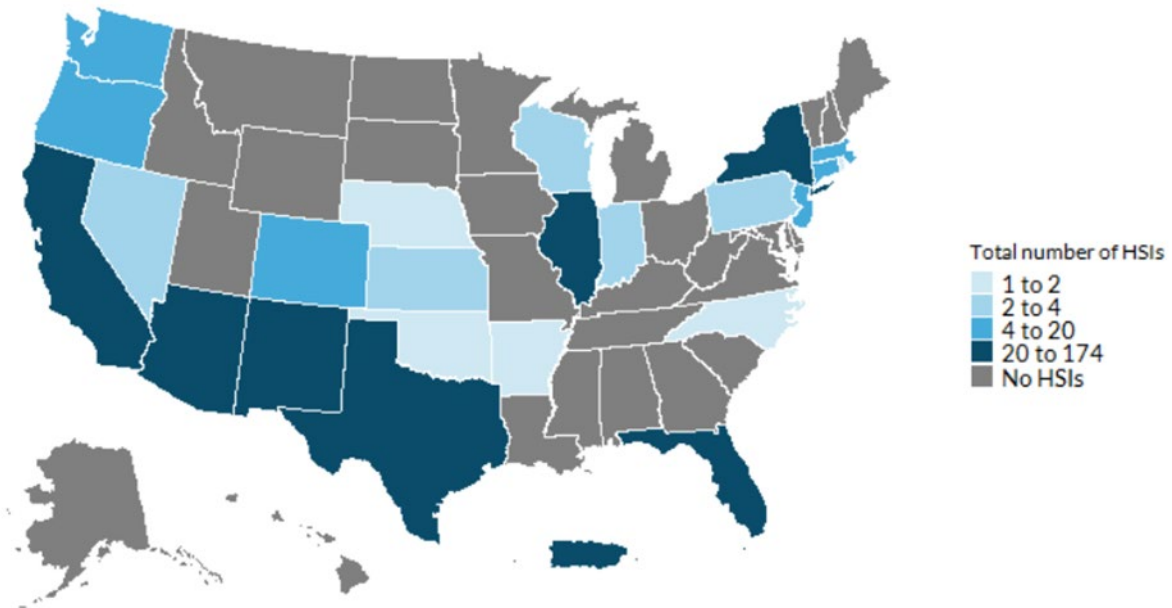
Source: Urban Institute analysis of Excelencia in Education data, available at https://www.edexcelencia.org/research-policy/hispanic-serving-institutions-hsis.
Note: This map uses 2020–2021 data.

American Latino museums tend to be newer and smaller than museums overall. Table 4 shows founding date ranges of museums in our database. Through online searches of institutions' websites and social media accounts, local news agencies, and other reputable sources, we identified founding dates for 217 of the 270 institutions in the database. Museums with a specific focus on American Latino history, arts, and culture tend to be newer, on average, than those that have only held exhibits on American Latino content, and only 3 percent of museums with an American Latino focus were founded before 1950, whereas 37 percent of museums that have only held exhibits on American Latino content were.

TABLE 4
Founding Dates of Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums

Founding date	American Latino focus (sole or partial)	Has hosted American Latino exhibits
2000 to present	38%	14%
1990 to 1999	22%	5%
1950 to 1989	38%	43%
Before 1950	3%	37%

Source: Urban Institute analysis.
Notes: *n*=217.

Institutions in the database reflect a range of sizes. Table 5 shows that museums with an American Latino mission or component tend to be significantly smaller than other museums that have had American Latino–focused exhibits but do not position themselves explicitly as American Latino–oriented (averages show similar patterns, but we report medians because a small number of large institutions skew averages upward). Note that these data are not exhaustive, as museums with less than $50,000 in revenue report to the IRS using a shorter 990N postcard that has limited information. Additionally, table 5 does not include university-affiliated museums.

TABLE 5
Median Assets and Revenues of Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums

Financial category	Central mission is American Latino	American Latino is *part* of mission	Has hosted American Latino exhibits
Assets (median)	$2,720,410	$5,074,796	$24,685,938
Revenue (median)	$593,161	$804,109	$4,967,133

Source: Urban Institute Analysis of financial data from the 2022 National Center for Charitable Statistics IRS Business Master Files, accessed April 4, 2023, https://nccs-data.urban.org/data.php?ds=bmf; the 2018 Institute of Museum and Library Services' Museum Data Files, accessed February 16, 2023, https://www.imls.gov/research-evaluation/data-collection/museum-data-files; and the ProPublica Nonprofit Explorer, accessed November 15, 2023, https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/.
Notes: *n*=214 of the 270 museums in Urban's database. Table excludes museums earning less than $50,000 in revenue and university-affiliated museums.

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program application process and requirements need to accommodate the more limited capacity and goals of smaller and newer American Latino institutions.**

## Other Museums in American Latino Neighborhoods

In addition to Urban's core scan of potential ALHC program applicants, we examined the locations of all museums across the United States to identify those located in census tracts where at least 25 percent of

the population was American Latino, *whether or not* those museums had any American Latino identities or programming histories. To do this we used the "Business Master Files" of nonprofit organizations available from the National Center for Charitable Statistics, identified those classified as museums, and linked their addresses to 2020 Census data. This resulted in 1,472 museums.

As shown in figure 3, more than half of these 1,472 museums were located in either California (384, or 26 percent) or Texas (366, or 25 percent); 81 percent were located in 10 states (in descending order: California, Texas, Florida, New Mexico, New York, Arizona, Illinois, Colorado, New Jersey, and Washington). Overall, there were museums in 40 states and Puerto Rico.

FIGURE 3
Where Museums in Neighborhoods with Large Latino Population Shares Are Located
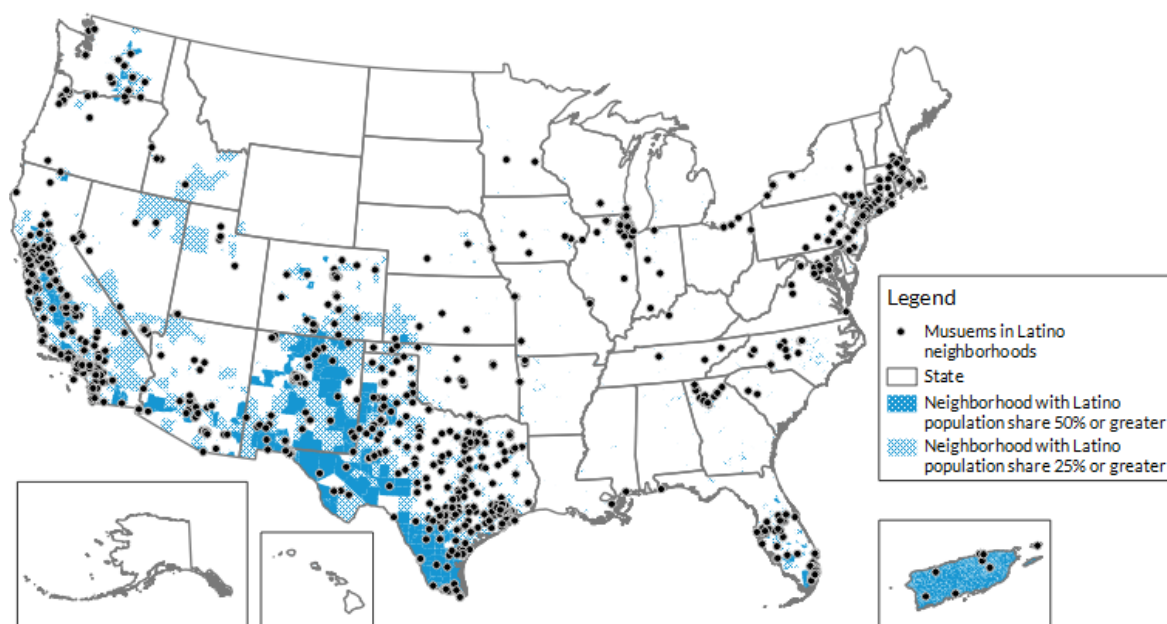
Source: Urban Institute analysis of the 2022 National Center for Charitable Statistics Internal Revenue Service Business Master Files, accessed April 4, 2023, https://nccs-data.urban.org/data.php?ds=bmf; and IPUMS National Historical Geographic Information System data based on American Community Survey 2017–2021 five-year estimates, accessed April 4, 2023, https://usa.ipums.org/usa/. .

Not all of these museums are potential candidates for the ALHC program. But the large number of museums in this group indicate a potential approach to thinking about museums' engagement with their surrounding American Latino communities and potential opportunities for developing programming that accounts for the history, art, and culture of those communities. It also indicates a potential approach for identifying and targeting for outreach (a) the museums in this list to understand more

about their community engagement and missions, and (b) locations where new community-based museums might be developing even if they are not yet showing up in these data files.

Recommendation: The ALHC program should consider eligibility parameters for museums located in American Latino communities that are interested in programming and exhibits focused on American Latino art, history, and culture.

Assessing Funding Experiences of American Latino Museums

This section of the report assesses the funding experiences of American Latino museums, focusing on the landscape of existing opportunities, the share of museums that have applied for federal funding, and cultural considerations and features of opportunities that increase (or decrease) the accessibility of funding opportunities.

What Is the Landscape of Existing Funding Opportunities for American Latino Stakeholders?

Grant funding provides a significant share of revenue for American Latino stakeholders. Survey respondents' top sources of current funding were philanthropic foundations (71 percent), individual donors (57 percent), and local or state government (54 percent), followed by the federal government (33 percent), corporate donors (22 percent), and other funding sources (16 percent). Building an infrastructure that can support the efforts of American Latino organizations to search and apply for grants is critical. Indeed, 65 percent of survey respondents reported that they had to cancel or delay projects or programs because they were unable to obtain grants.

Despite only a third of surveyed museums indicating the federal government as a top source of funding, respondents had been applying for federal grants and other funding opportunities. Overall, 80 percent of organizations had applied for federal grants, and among those that had heard of IMLS (86 percent of all survey participants), about two-thirds (63 percent) reported having applied for an IMLS grant.

Interviews with funders and collaborators, along with Urban's museum mapping scan, revealed a sizeable landscape of potential funding opportunities for American Latino museums—though some of these opportunities may be unknown to museums or perceived as inaccessible. This landscape scan identified funding opportunities from philanthropic foundations; federal, state, and local government agencies; and other types of funders (Yahner née Castro, Treskon, and Rodríguez 2023). Federal agencies included IMLS, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), NEH, the National Archives and Records Administration, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and the National Park Service.

During the listening sessions and in funder and stakeholder interviews, the need to increase representation of the American Latino community in the federal grant review process was highlighted. It was suggested that the ALHC program include reviewers representing the entire diversity of the American Latino community. As an example, we highlight an NEH program focused on supporting historically underrepresented communities in Cultural and Community Resilience.[15] The review process for that program is intentional about equity issues, and it asks questions to ensure the work is culturally appropriate and has representation from the source community. The review panel includes people from the source community, and if applicants involve collaborations of larger and smaller organizations, the partnership must show it is equitable and appropriate for the community. Another example is the MacArthur Foundation's participatory grantmaking pilot, the Culture, Equity, and the Arts program, which rated applications based on level of collaboration and commitment to fostering equity, connectivity, and relevance.[16] A last example, mentioned by an interviewed collaborator and open to international organizations, is the Inter-American Foundation's Community Development Grant program, which evaluates applicants on inclusivity (involving community voices), potential community impact, and potential to strengthen capacity for all participating organizations.

What Share of American Latino Stakeholders Have Applied for Federal Funding?

A number of American Latino museums have applied for federal grants, including grants with IMLS. Among survey respondents, 80 percent had applied for a federal grant from any agency, and 63 percent had applied for a grant from IMLS. Since this survey was fielded for a project specifically supported by

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[15] "Cultural and Community Resilience," National Endowment for the Humanities, accessed December 1, 2023, https://www.neh.gov/program/cultural-and-community-resilience.

[16] "Themes from Our Participatory Grantmaking Pilot in the Arts," MacArthur Foundation, March 10, 2020, https://www.macfound.org/press/article/themes-our-participatory-grantmaking-pilot-arts.

IMLS, we expect that this sample would be both somewhat more likely to be already aware of IMLS and other federal opportunities and more likely to have responded to the survey request than the full universe of American Latino museums. Nonetheless, it illustrates that there is already some engagement with IMLS among some American Latino museums.

Urban's review of awarded grants from federal agencies included those to museums that our search had already identified as having American Latino–focused missions, as well as to additional museums that we identified through key-word searches of federal agencies' grant portals.

Collectively, we identified 322 grants to 92 museums in our database from three federal granting institutions: IMLS, the NEA, and the NEH from 2013 to 2023 (table 6). On average, grants from IMLS are larger than grants from the NEA or NEH. Of the 92 museums in this list that received grants from 2013 to 2023, 67 (73 percent) received more than one grant, and 25 (27 percent) received five or more.

TABLE 6

Museums in Urban's Database of American Latino Museums: Federal Grant Awardees (2013–2023)

Federal grant provider	Number of awardees	Number of grants	Total awarded	Average grant award
Institute of Museum and Library Services	48	128	$19,436,642	$151,849
National Endowment for the Arts	52	176	$13,267,314	$75,382
National Endowment for the Humanities	12	21	$2,187,481	$104,166

Source: Urban Institute analysis of the grant databases of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Endowment for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Humanities.
Note: Our data collection for National Endowment for the Humanities grants was limited to institutional name searches of museums where the central mission is Latino because of how the NEH's funded-projects query form is organized.

The number of IMLS grants provided for American Latino–relevant exhibits and to American Latino museums has increased in recent years. Between 2013 and 2020, IMLS issued between 6 and 16 grants annually to museums in our database, but in 2021 it issued 20 and in 2022 it issued 27. Between 2013 and 2023, NEA grants ranged from 11 to 27 while NEH grants ranged from 0 to 5. Across the three agencies, the 52 grants issued in 2022 were the most over the 10-year span.

IMLS Grants

Using the IMLS grant search tool to identify grants, we identified 128 grants issued by IMLS between 2013 and 2022 for a total amount of $19,346,642, with an average grant award amount of $151,849 (see table 6, above). IMLS issued 16 grants to museums/organizations that had American Latino as a core institutional identity for a total of $1,930,141 (average of $121,634). For museums/organizations that had hosted exhibits related to American Latino content, IMLS issued 112 grants totaling $17,506,501 (with an average of $156,308). Of the various IMLS grant programs, Museums for America provided 69 grants for a total of $10,719,795.

NEA Grants

Urban used the NEA's grant search tool to identify NEA grants received by the 270 institutions in our database between 2013 and 2023. We found that 52 of the 270 museums had received an NEA grant. Overall, the NEA had awarded a total of 176 grants to these 52 museums, making the average number received per institution 3.4 grants. Among the 10 NEA grant programs that have supported the institutions in our database since 2013, Art Works is the most common, accounting for 98 (56 percent) of the 176 total grants received.

NEH Grants

As noted above, for this report, NEH grant searching has been limited to name searches of museums in the database and has not included key term searches for specific museum exhibits. This means that it only accounts for museums with a core or stated American Latino focus and does not account for museums that do not have such a focus but have hosted exhibits with content relevant to Latino themes. NEH grant sizes varied widely: although the average grant size was $104,000, the largest was for approximately $500,000.

Recommendation: While some American Latino museums are already applying for and receiving IMLS grants, the ALHC program should include intensive outreach to expand its reach in the field.

What Cultural Considerations Affect American Latino Museum Access to Federal Funding Support?

American Latino museums have been historically and structurally underresourced (compared with mainstream museums in the United States), elevating their need for capacity-building and strategic-planning supports. In listening sessions and interviews, stakeholders noted that funders have historically prioritized mainstream museums, including when trying to reach American Latino audiences, rather than providing funding to dedicated American Latino museums or institutions specifically. These funding challenges were reflected in the relatively modest sizes of American Latino museum survey respondents, with most coming from small- to medium-sized institutions, as shown in figure 4. Thirty-one percent of survey respondents reported annual revenue of less than $200,000.

FIGURE 4
2023 Revenue of American Latino Museum Survey Respondents
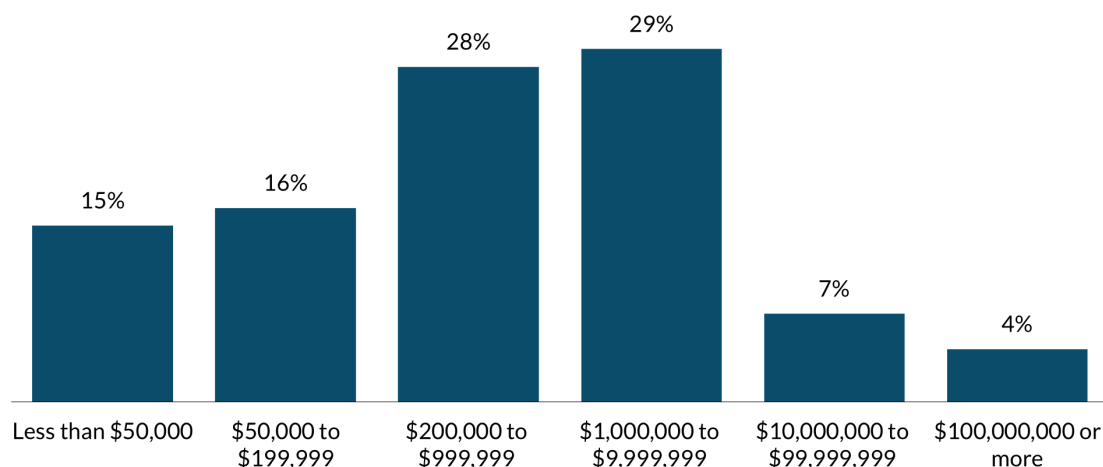
Source: American Latino History and Culture program survey of American Latino museums, 2023.
Notes: *n*=74. Revenue categories are mutually exclusive. Six museums did not answer the question, "How would you describe your organization's annual revenue?" The three museums reporting the largest revenues were part of much larger institutions, whose revenues they must have estimated.

Survey results indicated that capacity building was a high priority for American Latino museums when seeking grant funding. Seventy-three percent of survey respondents said that increasing their capacity to manage collections was a *high or extremely high priority*, and 81 percent said increasing their capacity for community engagement was a *high or extremely high priority*.

Relatedly, stakeholders, collaborators, and funders stated that American Latino museums have found the federal application processes challenging given its time-intensive and complex nature. As summarized by one stakeholder, "I think a lot of Latino museums tend to be understaffed, and the thought of taking on a federal grant if their staff does not have the bandwidth can be overwhelming." Staff at less-resourced American Latino organizations often needed to fill multiple roles, leaving limited ability to track and respond to grant opportunities. One stakeholder described the diverse roles they undertook as the only Spanish-speaker in their museum: "Yo soy editor, también. Traduzco para el museo y estoy haciendo un millon de cosas, pero poder tener dinero para poder contratar un *fellow* o poner a alguien con el cual yo pueda trabajar y sería un tipo de ayuda sería increíble."[17] Others referenced the struggle of managing museum programs while keeping the lights on and painting walls.

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program should incorporate a mechanism for offering strategic planning and/or seed funding to support the capacity-building needs of the many smaller American Latino museums.**

Given these capacity constraints, American Latino organizations have to strategize on which awards seem feasible to win and offer sufficient funds to warrant time spent on the application. These perspectives were reflected in Urban's survey findings. As shown in figure 5, the ease of an application process (49 percent) and grants management requirements (47 percent) were top considerations when deciding whether to apply for a grant.

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[17] Translation to English: "I'm an editor, too. I translate for the museum and I'm doing a million things, but being able to have money to be able to hire a fellow or hire someone with whom I can work and who would be a type of help would be incredible."

FIGURE 5
American Latino Museum Survey Respondents' Top Considerations When Deciding Whether to Apply for a Grant
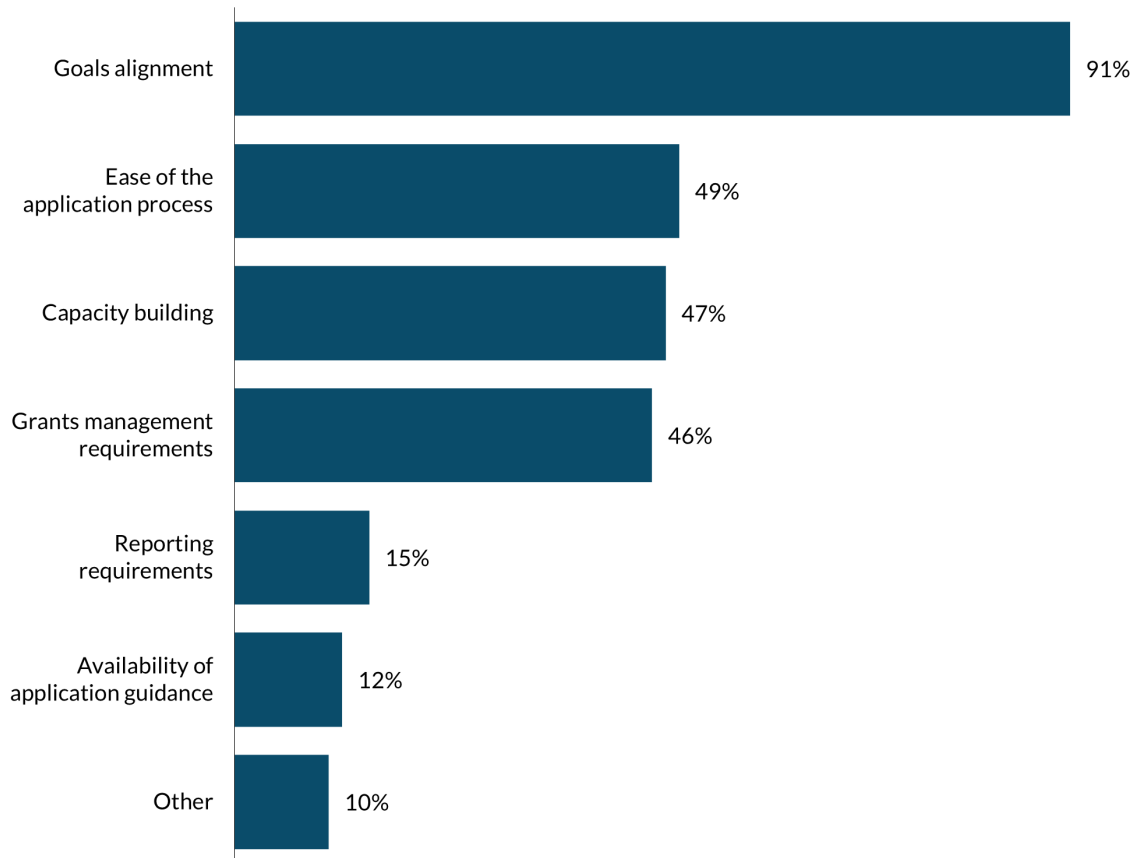
Source: American Latino History and Culture program survey of American Latino museums, 2023.
Notes: *n*=67. Organizations could select more than one category. Six museums did not answer the question, "What are your top considerations when deciding whether to apply for a grant from any source?" Other responses included grant size, eligibility requirements, and the grant's lead time.

Several stakeholders indicated that they instead turned to foundations or local governmental agencies to support their museum activities. Those funds were considered more accessible in terms of application effort and requirements, and museums tended to be already familiar with these institutions and comfortable with how their requirements and processes worked. As noted above, Urban's survey indicated that almost two-thirds of respondents regularly relied on nonfederal funding sources. Additionally, one interviewed stakeholder with capacity for grant writing had applied multiple times for IMLS funding unsuccessfully before deciding to focus on local funding sources that, though smaller, were more reliable and achievable for sustaining their work.

American Latino museum stakeholders expressed a need for culturally responsive training and technical assistance (TA) on federal fundraising. A recurring theme from listening-session participants and interviewees was interest in accessible materials and technical assistance to help them navigate the grant process. Though some interviewees reported that IMLS already provided helpful technical assistance, others were unaware of its availability or had not attempted to seek it. Many listening session attendees and interviewees (including funders) saw Spanish-language materials and communications as particularly helpful and inclusive gestures. These could range from prerecorded workshops in English and Spanish to support varied levels of applicants (e.g., those applying for the first time, those experienced with the process but not the ALHC program) to providing Spanish-language application materials and instructions to lower barriers to understanding complex federal application requirements. One federal funder cited their agency's Spanish translation of a funding opportunity to help Puerto Rican applicants after Hurricane Maria in 2017.

Recommendation: IMLS should increase awareness, the availability, and the cultural responsiveness of its technical assistance to increase equity in the application process for ALHC program stakeholders, including by offering Spanish-language materials.

Several survey and interview respondents reported that individualized TA has been helpful in their fundraising efforts. Two nonfederal funders we interviewed described contracting with TA experts who held both American Latino museum experience and capacity-fundraising expertise. These individuals worked one-on-one with potential applicants to increase their likelihood of securing grant awards. One survey respondent described this TA as a very valuable initiative. A different survey respondent also suggested that IMLS "provide a planning grant to work with a specialist in this area to create a collections development plan and increase understanding among staff of [American Latino] history and culture [institutions]." With the capacity-building needs just discussed, the need for planning grants or seed funding came up repeatedly in Urban's field research, as discussed later.

What Features of Funding Opportunities Increase (or Decrease) Accessibility for American Latino Stakeholders?

American Latino museums' decision to apply for federal grants can be affected by a number of factors, including the alignment of grant program goals with those of their organization, the complexity of the

application process, and the potential for a successful and sizable award. Organizations that responded to Urban's survey were asked why they had decided to apply or not apply for federal funding, including IMLS grants (figure 6). Among those that had applied for a federal grant, 93 percent listed goals alignment as the top consideration when deciding which federal grant to apply for (and whether to apply), followed by grants management requirements (47 percent), ease of the application process (47 percent), and capacity building (35 percent).

American Latino Museum Survey Respondents' Top Considerations When Deciding to Apply for a Federal Grant
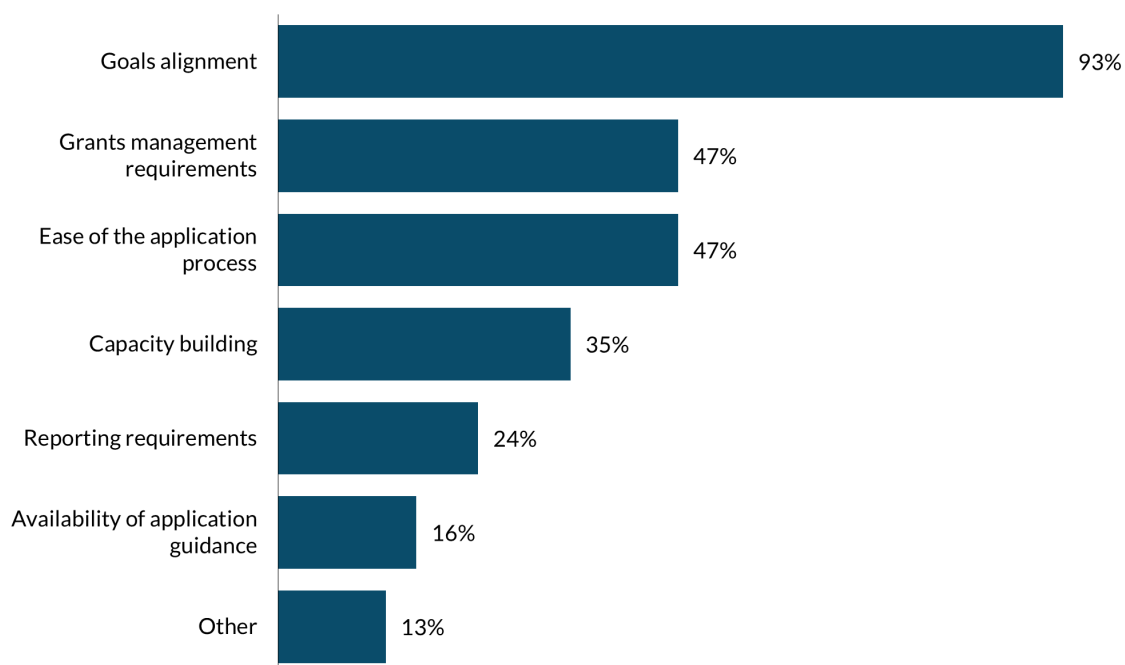
Source: American Latino History and Culture program survey of American Latino museums, 2023.
Notes: *n*=56. Organizations could select more than one category. Other responses included grant size, eligibility requirements, and the grant's lead time.

Among the 12 organizations that had heard about IMLS and had not applied for an IMLS grant, a lack of time or staff to prepare applications (50 percent), a lack of awareness of IMLS's grant programs (42 percent), and the complicated application process (33 percent) were among the top reasons they had not applied (figure 7).

FIGURE 7
Reasons Museums Had Not Applied for a Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services

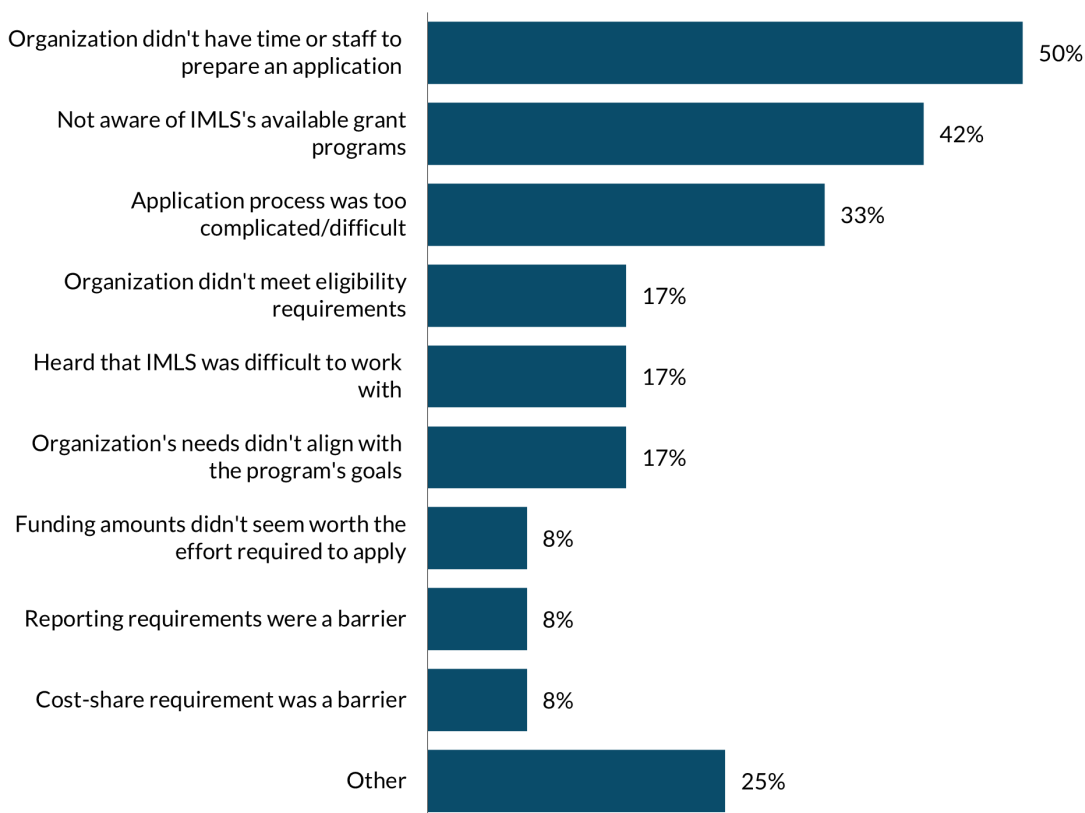| Reason	Percentage
Organization didn't have time or staff to prepare an application	50%
Not aware of IMLS's available grant programs	42%
Application process was too complicated/difficult	33%
Organization didn't meet eligibility requirements	17%
Heard that IMLS was difficult to work with	17%
Organization's needs didn't align with the program's goals	17%
Funding amounts didn't seem worth the effort required to apply	8%
Reporting requirements were a barrier	8%
Cost-share requirement was a barrier	8%
Other	25%

Source: American Latino History and Culture program survey of American Latino museums, 2023.
Notes: *n*=12. Organizations could select more than one category. Only the 12 organizations that answered "no" to question 18 ("Has your organization ever applied for an IMLS grant?") could answer the question on reasons for not applying for Institute of Museum and Library Services grants ("What are your top considerations when deciding which federal grants to apply for?"). Other responses included collaborating with another organization instead of seeking IMLS funding.

Recommendation: Through increased and intentional outreach, IMLS needs to ensure the American Latino museum field identifies IMLS as a funding agency and the ALHC program as a key opportunity.

Moreover, we asked survey respondents about the level of priority across activities when considering their needs for grants, on a scale of 1 (lowest priority) to 5 (highest priority). The average ranking for supporting exhibits and/or program development was extremely high (5). The average ranking was 4 for other activities, with the exception of "increase online presence" and "support internships/fellowships for those in academic program," which were ranked as moderate priorities (3) (figure 8). These could be areas for future capacity building.

How American Latino Museum Survey Respondents Prioritize Activities When Considering Their Needs for Grants
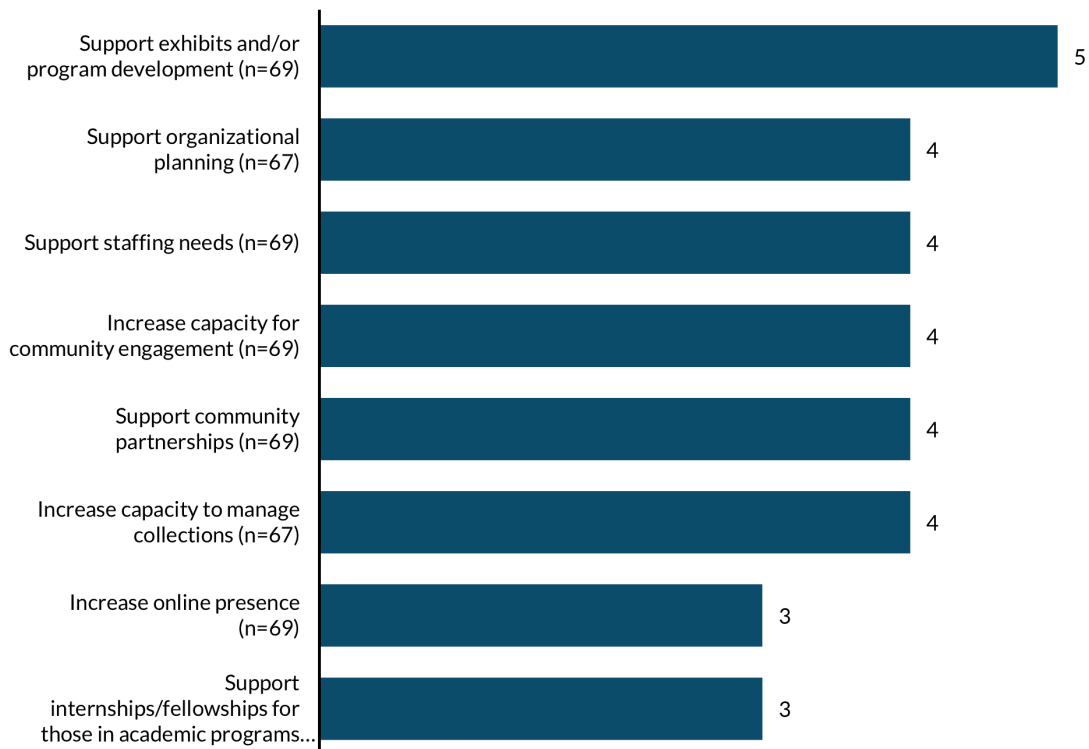
Source: American Latino History and Culture program survey of American Latino museums, 2023.
Notes: *N*=74. Everyone was eligible to answer this question; the sample sizes for each activity are shown in parentheses. Respondents could prioritize activities on a scale of 1 (lowest priority) to 5 (highest priority).

Another challenge organizations face when applying for grants that can be a focus area for future improvement is cost matching, or the requirement to obtain matching funds. In fact, about half of the survey participants (48 percent) indicated that it was challenging to obtain matching funds when they were required for a grant. Respondents named several difficulties associated with obtaining matching funds, including difficulties identifying sources of matching funds in the first place. One respondent said, "It is difficult to find funds when the project does not fulfill a specific directive," and another said, "It is hard to find funders for matches that we haven't already asked for other funding." Other respondents said that their organizations struggled to support matching funds because of their limited finances. One respondent said, "We have very little internal funding, so depending on what is required for matching, we often rely on multiple grants to make this happen."

Some respondents noted that their organizations were often unable to support large projects, which decreased their interest in matching funds. One respondent explained, "We are a small organization and do not have the capacity to double our projects' scope of work to increase expenses. When cutting expenses in half sometimes the amount is no longer worth the effort of applying for a grant." Respondents also reported that the timing of grant applications can present difficulties in obtaining matching funds: "Timing is the biggest challenge. It is difficult to obtain additional gifts or grants in time for an IMLS grant application and then hold on to them and keep the donors satisfied during the time it takes to hear about IMLS [awards]." Additional challenges included organizations' endowments prohibiting matching funds; a lack of success with private foundations and individual donors; some grants prohibiting staff salaries from being included in the match; and dependency on individual donors, since "the project would need to be something that those donors want to fund."

Given these challenges, potential ALHC program applicants would benefit from streamlined and condensed application processes. Several interviewed funders—including one in a federal agency—described how their organizations had consciously reviewed their application processes to remove less critical requirements, simplify language into the most layperson-friendly terms, and streamline the overall application processes to make them more accessible, including to American Latino museum applicants. Two private funders of culturally specific museums also described how they accepted applications in whatever language the applicant chose to submit them in. Although nearly all applications were nonetheless in English, for those that were not, the funders simply had them professionally translated to English before undergoing panel review.

Listening-session participants indicated that they hoped IMLS would create a streamlined and short application process, noting that to promote equity and inclusion of American Latino museums, IMLS funding processes, which are often time-intensive, complex, and cumbersome, should be streamlined. Museums with small staffs often do not consider applying or do not complete applications because of strained internal capacity. Three participants shared that they would like the grant application to be short, concise, and easy to complete. Two participants raised that they find applying for federal funding onerous and complicated—one mentioned that the last federal funding grant they applied for required a 60-page narrative. The participants highlighted that it would be helpful and an easier lift to make the application as concise and streamlined as possible.

As noted previously in figure 7, sizeable shares of survey respondents noted burden as a barrier: one-half reported lacking staff time and capacity and one-third reported the application process was too complicated and difficult. Because federal grant applications often require so much work, they can reduce the capacity American Latino museum staff members have for other tasks. As one respondent

wrote, "We are in need [of] grants that have a straightforward application and reporting process to preserve our staff capacity in order to focus on the work at hand." One potential approach mentioned by several stakeholders and applied by nonfederal funders was that of a two-stage application process, beginning with a letter of intent followed by an invited full application. As such letters require fewer resources to put together, this process helps to limit the burden on the applicants (and reviewers) at the initial stage.

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program application requirements should be streamlined to reduce the complexity and time-intensity of applying. IMLS should consider a two-stage application process to broaden the field of applicants and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of culturally responsive TA by targeting offerings that match American Latino museums' levels of need.**

Many, but not all, of American Latino museums' proposed projects were consistent with federal funding requirements. About three-quarters (74 percent) of the survey respondents reported having activities or projects that were generally considered allowable for grant funding. Furthermore, almost 90 percent of organizations had activities or projects they wanted to fund that were consistent with the ALHC program. But not all funding goals were allowable under federal grant trends: as one example in particular, the ability to cover operational expenses was noted by multiple interviewees.

One interviewed federal funder indicated that for its funding opportunities, it provides technical assistance to help potential grantees understand whether they have ideas that are applicable to the grant requirements. This funder has provided a lot of TA, which has included reading drafts of potential grantees' ideas and proposals and offering feedback to improve program applicability. This funder believes it is important to ensure such TA is offered to applicants at different levels, through recorded and easily accessible workshops and with multilingual access if possible. This funder also included Spanish-language webinars covering at least one of its existing programs on its website.

Ensuring grantees and funders both find reporting requirements meaningful can be impactful for the ALHC program. For many potential grantees, funding-application processes can seem burdensome, extractive, and long. Many interviewers expressed that the application process and requirements can feel like an investigation and exploitative. Providing storytelling alternatives may increase accessibility; for instance, allowing applicants to speak to their successes and milestones can make the application process less extractive. Latinos have a strong oral culture, and this alternative might be a way to use that asset (Kinnally 2019). IMLS can also provide other alternatives and formats for application submissions, like video submissions, for applicants to describe their goals and outcomes.

Other challenges that emerged in interviews included federal terminology, with some terms, such as "NOFO" ("notice of funding opportunity"), being potentially unrecognizable to many. This speaks to a general appetite for technical assistance for all applicants and greater clarity and simplicity in government documents, but it also points to broader opportunities for funders to make their application processes more accessible. Language support is one example: some foundation funders accept applications in multiple languages and have them professionally translated prior to review; other interviewees noted that Spanish-language workshops and application materials written in Spanish made the process more accessible.

Lastly, one recommendation already taken up by IMLS and others is to offer opportunities for applicants to review examples of successful grant applications. Applicants noted the value of seeing exemplars and project overviews for identifying elements of successful proposals they can model in their own efforts.

Recommendation: Building on existing IMLS practices, the ALHC program should incorporate culturally competent TA and accessible language.

Growing the Capacity of American Latino Museums

This third section of the report's findings focuses on growing the capacity of American Latino museums by explaining what success for the ALHC program would look like, what capacity building would best inform this success, and what performance measurement IMLS should engage in to measure the program's progress.

What Would the ALHC Program's Success Look Like for the Field of American Latino Museums?

Participants in the listening sessions and interviewed stakeholders hoped the ALHC program would promote connections and collaboration among American Latino museums to grow and strengthen the field. When asked how the ALHC program can best support their organizations, several survey respondents expressed a desire for IMLS to facilitate connections and collaborations between American Latino museums. One respondent recommended that IMLS sponsor or promote "conferences, seminars, or online platforms where these organizations can share experiences, exchange ideas, and learn from one another." Another respondent pointed out that collaborations would allow organizations to pursue "larger grants that will have an even greater positive social impact on our culture."

In addition to empowering American Latino museums through collaboration, Urban's field research highlighted the importance of the US government elevating and supporting "first voice" cultural narratives, giving visibility to the American Latino museum field. "If museums are to accurately recover the past, honestly engage with the present, and creatively imagine the future, they will need diverse, first voice practitioners to lead the way in empowering museums to better serve diverse and deserving communities."[18] One interviewed funder said, "I would like to see folks feeling like they can have a federal grant from this type of organization for this work…Also strengthening the identity of this community of institutions is an outcome I'd like to see…We're [the ALHC program] driving cultural preservation by first voice." Another funder indicated that the impact of the ALHC program "would be that Latino-serving organizations will feel like there is accessible support through the federal

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[18] Eduardo Díaz, "First Voice Representation in Museum Practice," University of Minnesota Institute for Advanced Study, accessed December 11, 2023, https://ias.umn.edu/eduardo-diaz-first-voice-representation-museum-practice.

government [and this will] encourage younger generations of Latino [museum] administrators that enter the field."

For me, one of the most beautiful things is when people see their reality affirmed, and the impact that can have on their sense of self-esteem and their ability to walk on this earth with a sense of "I belong here and I'm worthy." And it's a very fundamental feeling that people have and that needs to be spread to other communities. All of us deserve this. It's extending the feeling that the dominant culture has…Not just speaking to our community, but it can speak to everyone about our world, about life, history, and culture.
—Interviewed collaborator

The ALHC program also presents opportunities for American Latino museums to partner with local postsecondary HSIs, both to support evaluation and to assist with professionalization. Such partnerships could serve to strengthen multiple components of the program's theory of change, supporting capacity building and growth in the American Latino museum field. They could also help smaller museums overcome the challenges created by limited resources, as listening sessions revealed American Latino museums' need for funding and training for evaluation assistance. One stakeholder indicated that their organization did not have enough internal capacity, resources, or potential survey respondents to conduct evaluation efforts.

> **Recommendation: IMLS should elevate multiple opportunities for connection, partnership, and collaboration among potential ALHC program applicants to empower and grow the American Latino museum field.**

One approach to framing the ALHC program and its goals is to break down its components into clear pathways that identify, in the form of a logic model, the key activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact. In other words, what is the program *intending* to do, *how* is it intending to do it, and how does one know when that has *happened*? As one collaborator shared, "Evaluation in general is an area where a lot of museums probably would love some help." Here, we highlight the following three interrelated goals:

▪ Support the existing field, in particular grants and evaluation support for grantees.

- Grow and strengthen the field by identifying and providing technical assistance to new potential grantees and supporting networks and networking opportunities.

- Support professionals by funding fellowship programming and identify opportunities for pipeline development and deeper ties between museums and postsecondary institutions.

This breakdown is illustrated in figure 9 and has the potential to inform the development of metrics that are targeted to understanding particular pathways to success in growing the American Latino museum field. Though there are logic models laying out pathways for museums to understand the relationships between activities and outcomes,[19] a fully fleshed-out logic model for the ALHC program may be best conceived of as a multilayered platform with complementary but distinct elements.

FIGURE 9

Elements of a Potential Theory of Change for the American Latino History and Culture Program
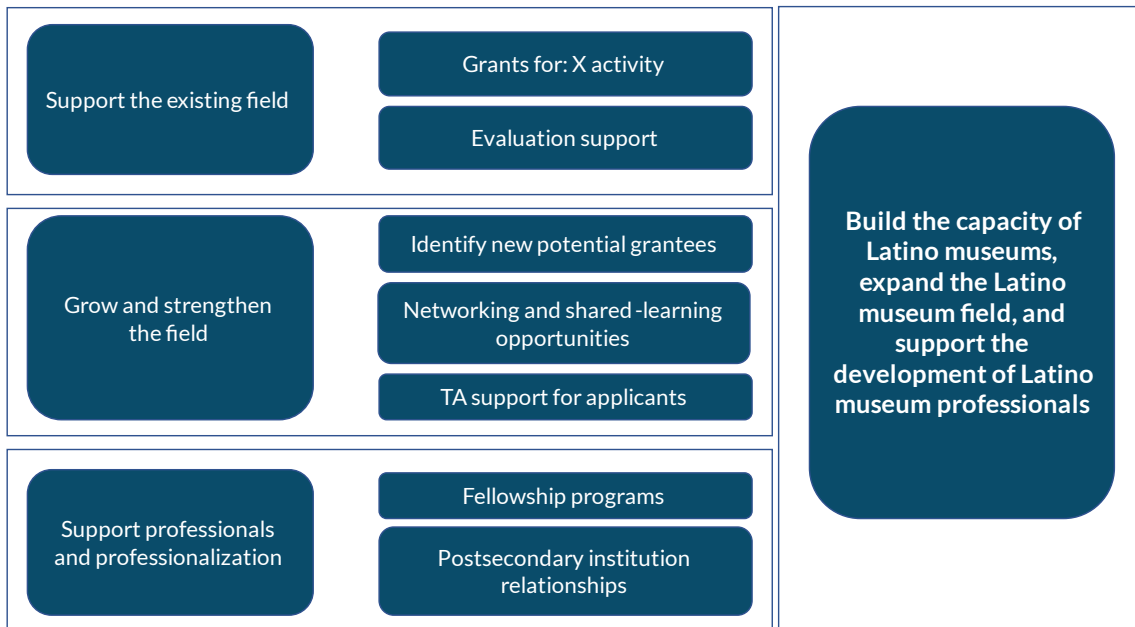
Source: Created by the authors.
Note: TA = technical assistance.

Recommendation: IMLS should create a theory of change for the ALHC program that illustrates its intended impact for the field and can help inform how grantees' projects can help reach those goals.

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[19] For example, see the museum social impact toolkit, available at https://www.museumsocialimpact.org/toolkit/.

What Capacity-Building Assets, Resources, and Needs of American Latino Museums Can Inform the ALHC Program?

Capacity building and mentorship were important to listening-session participants. They suggested that IMLS could provide trainings and funding for capacity building and professional development, and foster spaces for museum professionals to network. These types of opportunities could also lead to increased staff diversity, strengthen staff retention, and help organizations train and mentor emerging young Latino museum professionals.

Smaller and newer American Latino museums would benefit from seed funding and planning grants, without a cost-matching requirement. IMLS offers special initiatives for smaller institutions, such as the Inspire! grant, and stakeholders confirmed a need for seed funding, planning grants, and operational and capacity support, all particularly important for smaller and newer institutions. Listening-session participants noted that American Latino organizations often struggle to raise funds to institutionalize, creating a need for the ALHC program to focus on providing core institutional-development funding. Participants suggested that IMLS could offer capacity-building grants that, for example, could provide two-year support to an institution in its initial development stages to help it fundraise more effectively. This could include creating a support system to help institutions write and manage grants and hire staff for grant writing and development. Alternatively, IMLS could host a support network where large and smaller institutions could learn from each other and provide training, technical assistance, and support to enhance this learning.

With regard to cost sharing, many interviewed stakeholders indicated that cost matching created an additional challenge when seeking federal funding. An evaluation of the IMLS African American History and Culture program found that once IMLS decided to remove a cost-matching requirement for grants below $50,000, this barrier was removed for small nonprofits to apply and their success rate increased subsequently (Ashley et al. 2021, 25).

Listening-session participants also mentioned that it would be important for the ALHC support to be sustainable by offering avenues for longer-term funding. Interviewees noted that multiyear funding, such as for a three-year grant period, can help institutions spend less time on recurrent paperwork upkeep and dedicate more capacity to programming. Several survey respondents also emphasized the importance of multiyear funding, noting that multiyear grants "allow for substantial, transformative impact" in a way that one-year grants cannot.

> **Recommendation: The ALHC program infrastructure should incorporate opportunities for seed funding, planning grants, flexibility on cost matching, and multiyear timelines and/or make clear to candidates that such opportunities are available in other IMLS program opportunities relevant to applicant needs.**

American Latino museums must embrace and harness the power of digital technology to preserve their offerings and expand their audiences (Barriendos 2022; Reina Ortiz et al. 2021). Listening-session participants highlighted that in our current age of digitization, updated websites are increasingly important for successful programs to use for grant applications and public exposure. They felt that many funders evaluated the strength of museums and programs by assessing their websites. Additionally, enhanced websites could enable people who might not be able to physically travel to a museum to access exhibits and collections online. As one interviewee noted, stories of American Latino impact "beyond the walls of a physical museum" can be overlooked in branding and marketing, and museums often prioritize storytelling through physical exhibits. Institutions should leverage digital platforms to expand the reach of their storytelling and influence.

Many survey respondents also spoke to the need to digitize collections and develop web-based content. When asked how the ALHC program can most effectively support Latino museums, one respondent wrote, "IMLS can offer technical assistance and training to [my organization] to enhance their capacity to manage and preserve digital collections effectively. This can involve workshops, webinars, or direct mentoring to help the organization navigate digital archiving best practices, metadata standards, and preservation strategies." Another respondent emphasized that digitization and web-based content are essential for reaching "underresourced [American Latino] communities across the nation." Another respondent wrote, "Digitization is very grant dependent and especially so for AV [audio-visual] materials, for which there is the most need."

Latino museums have the most expertise in understanding Latino life, art, history, and culture, which can be shared through authentic and equitable partnerships with larger mainstream museums. Listening-session participants hoped the ALHC program would provide equitable support and incentives to create the conditions in which Latino curators, artists, and educators could have formidable careers at Latino institutions.

One survey respondent from a non-Latino museum spoke to the potential of the ALHC program to help mainstream, non-Latino organizations form collaborations and partnerships with Latino museums and communities. When asked how the ALHC program can most effectively support their organization,

this respondent wrote, "Our archive has very few collections relating to American Latino History and Culture. It is a large hole in our collecting scope, which we would like to rectify. I am interested in receiving support for outreach programs so that we can connect with underrepresented communities and build relationships."

Smaller grant funding and TA for emerging Latino museums could be administered successfully through a pass-through funding agency. Several interviewed collaborators and funders mentioned the benefits of, and the need for, planning-related grant funding for smaller Latino museums, yet they acknowledged the challenges that IMLS might have in managing a large number of small grants. They suggested the idea of funding a pass-through agency responsible for administering such small grants and simultaneously working with grantees to provide the additional TA needed to build their capacity to grow.

One interviewed private funder passed funding to a large Latino-focused association to manage small grants awarded to Latino arts museums. This association entirely ran the grant fund, including preparing funding-opportunity notices, specifying application requirements, reviewing application submissions, and issuing awards to selected grantees.

Another interviewed collaborator referenced a pass-through funding and mentorship program that IMLS recently used successfully to administer smaller grants (accompanied with TA) to small and/or rural libraries. Administration of these grants was accompanied by one-on-one mentorship that facilitated capacity building for the selected grantees. An independent evaluation of this program conducted by TCC Group (2023) showed promising findings.

Recommendation: IMLS should consider opportunities to expand the reach of the ALHC program through robust technical assistance and by encouraging partnerships and mentoring opportunities, particularly ones that support smaller museums.

What Performance Metrics, Outputs, and Outcomes Should IMLS Collect from Applicants to Assess Progress toward the ALHC Program's Goals?

Many survey respondents (87 percent) indicated that they had activities and projects that were consistent with the ALHC program's goals, and most (60 percent) also had a formal process for tracking

their activities and projects' progress and results. These organizations could benefit from additional guidance and support to develop a formal tracking process that is valuable for informing both IMLS and the actual grantees on progress and impact.

IMLS has existing interim and final reporting requirements for tracking a set of indicators based on a list selected during the initial grant application. Museums awarded grants after November 12, 2020, also report on performance measurement, and particularly on activity effectiveness, efficiency, quality, and timeliness. Feedback from the AAHC program's evaluation indicated that most grantees of that program found IMLS's requirements reasonable (73 percent of grantees surveyed reported that requirements were not a significant burden) and were more generally interested in making program evaluation more central to their own work (Ashley et al. 2021). But feedback from ALHC program stakeholders we interviewed indicated an appetite for further elaboration on these requirements and alignment with broader program outcomes to make reporting requirements both easier to navigate and more useful to grantees and IMLS. As one collaborator interviewee noted:

> This area has been the biggest challenge for decades for all IMLS grant programs. There's a lack of a standard evaluation tool to measure outcomes-based success and grantees are left to figure out and report on their own. Most of the time what IMLS receives are "outputs" versus "outcomes" based evaluation results which cannot make the solid case on the indicators of success or impact. I so ardently wish IMLS would pilot a practical and easy-to-use evaluation framework and toolset with which they can train and gather the data from the applicants. This needs to be incorporated at the onset and monitored throughout the lifespan of the project.

This illustrates the challenge of identifying an approach that both clearly links a project's reporting with its intended impact. Modeling a theory of change to identify the intended through-line of project activities and identifying measurement approaches relevant to those activities could more clearly align with receipt of reporting that aligns more obviously with intended impact (Scott 2015). This also highlights the potential role for evaluation experts in helping museum staff identify theories of change, appropriate metrics, and useful data-collection and analysis strategies.

When asked what kinds of grants IMLS could provide to best help their organizations further their missions, a few respondents mentioned grants for tracking and evaluating their performance. One respondent suggested that IMLS could provide "grants to implement systems to make us more efficient and/or a better steward of our collections, for example a grant to implement a recommended system to measure program impact that could then make it easier to present data to other funders who might then want to support our work." This sort of activity would also have value to the broader field as a way to identify more systematic approaches to measuring impact.

ALHC program applicants should be encouraged to propose performance-evaluation activities of interest to themselves and to other American Latino museums. For example, grantees could focus on how their work is sustainable and ways in which they are creating thriving spaces and communities. And publicly and systematically reporting activities and impact could in turn help inform and advance the American Latino museum field.

Other survey responses and listening-session participants also underscored an interest in flexibility. One survey respondent said that their organization would benefit most from "grants that support evolving forms of practice, especially as it relates to collections care and capacity for building community partnership in support of that work." The respondent added, "It would be useful to design reporting structures that afford flexibility as goals often shift as this work grows and iterates and progress might look different than originally articulated in grant narratives."

> **Recommendation: IMLS should build flexibility into its reporting requirements, both to incorporate the range of potential impacts and to acknowledge the ways in which goals can emerge throughout the grant lifecycle.**

This also points to the possibility of exploring other, less resource-intensive opportunities for obtaining feedback from grantees. One option could be tiered requirements: one interviewed stakeholder recommended that IMLS adopt a two-pronged performance measurement approach for the ALHC program that include both (1) a streamlined, simple standard set of quantitative metrics, and (2) a customizable qualitative self-assessment that would allow American Latino museums the freedom to submit any media to show, for example, visiting families learning about the culture. They suggested that "qualitative analysis will be depending on the program and the quantitative analysis and reports should be a very straightforward format for all of us…I would say that we have to follow certain protocols to make sure we all are in the same conversation."

Other approaches beyond standard (or even refined) reporting would include continuing existing IMLS practices, such as discussions and/or site visits with grantees and engagement opportunities at webinars and conferences (being sure to include grantees but also nonapplicants and those that applied for funding but did not receive it). Another option in this space could be surveying grantees with short pulse surveys of only two or three questions. This could be an opportunity to regularize ongoing feedback loops with a lower barrier of entry to participation and identify themes, challenges, and developing issues in the museum field. Though IMLS is developing a museum survey (that at least in part follows on its existing library survey) and has sponsored external evaluations of existing grant programs

such as the AAHC and Native American/Native Hawaiian grant programs (IMLS 2023b), these efforts are relatively intensive.

> **Recommendation: IMLS should explore options for assessing ALHC program progress beyond traditional reporting requirements and disseminate findings to inform the broader field.**

By compiling, reporting on, and making results public, IMLS could strengthen those feedback loops with museums and the broader public. Allowing for this form of feedback to *not* be linked to grantee performance review or even allowing it to be provided anonymously (keeping in mind the benefits of monitoring uptake patterns to understand what sorts of institutions are actually responding) could create more openness to reporting on challenges.

Implementing the American Latino History and Culture Program

In this final section, we describe the priorities and considerations that IMLS should consider in implementing the ALHC program. This section also describes how IMLS can capitalize on other federal models to increase the likelihood of the ALHC program's success.

What ALHC Program Implementation Priorities Would Be Most Effective?

Listening-session participants, survey respondents, and interviewees stressed the importance of communication and outreach for successful ALHC program implementation. As IMLS already provides a range of communication and technical assistance around existing grant programs, some recommendations are more reminders for the importance of existing practices, while stressing how important diverse and intensive outreach is for the American Latino museum field. One interviewed collaborator summarized a perspective voiced by other participants:

> IMLS has to be proactive about reaching out to the Latino community to expand the pool and educate other nonmuseum organizations on how they can partner with an IMLS-eligible applicant on a project. Oftentimes the same museums apply for and get the funding while others miss out as they do not fit into the strictly defined parameters of eligibility. IMLS has to be inspiring and creative in their outreach efforts, especially to launch and make the new grant program successful.

Listening-session participants and survey respondents elevated the need for IMLS to clearly communicate grant program components with as much advance notice as possible. One suggestion was a live/recorded question-and-answer session with a corresponding list of frequently asked questions providing a detailed overview of grant program details (such as eligibility, grant amounts, application requirements, and eligible uses of funds). Participants noted that sharing this sort of information in advance and in ways that encourage smaller organizations to apply could expand the potential applicant base. Survey respondents indicated the value of workshops, webinars, and other training opportunities with clear overviews of selection criteria and model project examples, especially for staff at smaller organizations who may be "learning to do grants on their own," as one respondent put it. Lastly, multilingual ALHC program opportunities and workshops would improve accessibility and convey inclusivity to diverse Latino museum stakeholders.

Development of the ALHC program comes at a time when funders in cultural spaces have increasingly been embracing efforts to support diversity, equity, and inclusion, including by sharing opportunities with smaller and culturally specific museums. According to interviews that Urban conducted, these efforts have included intentional streamlining of funding requirements and other activities to increase application accessibility. When conducting open calls, private funders often apply a two-step process involving a simple letter of interest or inquiry which is then assessed for eligibility and potential success, followed by invitation to those whose letters showed the greatest potential. This process saves time and energy for museum applicants and was viewed by several ALHC stakeholders as a valuable approach.

The level of TA offered by some funders was impactful for interviewed stakeholders. One listening-session participant shared the following collaborative application experience they had had with a nonfederal funder, hoping IMLS might incorporate some elements for the ALHC program:

> One of the things about [this private funder] is that they really sit down and work with you on your application. They invite you to apply. They want to hear your ideas and then they talk back and forth to you until they get the application in the right place...So it feels like even in the grant writing process, the collaboration...It feels like you're in partnership just from the very beginning.

This level of engagement requires resources but has clear value: one interviewed federal funder stated that their office conducted more than 500 counseling calls over four months during an application period; they noted applicants were grateful for connecting directly with government staff and that these engagements were valuable for building relationships with applicants, especially during the launch of new programs. This kind of tailored engagement can help put a face to government institutions that might otherwise seem inaccessible. Interviewees from federal agencies also noted the value of this deeper engagement, noting that directly engaging with prospective applicants to answer questions about funding programs can demystify funding processes and mitigate reluctance organizations might feel to reach out to the federal government for support.

Recommendation: IMLS should put a high priority on supporting potential ALHC applicants through tailored TA that builds on its own work in this space and practices undertaken by other funders.

Concerted and sustained outreach to reach potential applicants is also needed. One respondent suggested that IMLS "could create and maintain a dialogue to understand the changing needs" of potential applicants. Other respondents emphasized that IMLS's outreach should include organizations "that are not on the regular circuit of networks," and that "face-to-face conversations with people on the ground and in the trenches are the most effective way to truly understand organizational needs."

Expanded outreach to Latino museums in person, virtually, and through social media needs to be an ongoing process as the pool of potential applicants is constantly changing. Though online directories of Latino museums are available and IMLS has close connections with museum associations and museums across the country, the reality is that many museums are not familiar with, or do not have capacity to monitor, IMLS opportunities. This presents an opportunity for IMLS to more actively track these museums and work to identify new ones as they develop. Institutional lists and outreach efforts need to be ongoing and flexible. The typology database of museums created for this project could be a baseline for IMLS to continue growing. Such work will take staff hours and resources but would also have ongoing value for better understanding the field of American Latino museums as it continues to develop.

Other interviewees noted the potential value in IMLS fostering deeper engagement and information sharing with local networks of American Latino museum funders, institutional partners, local governments, and city and state arts agencies, as these entities may have a clearer sense of new local developments and the local American Latino museum and museum support ecosystem (keeping in mind that in some places, language barriers or citizenship-status issues could indicate strained relationships and limited trust between government and community members).

Recommendation: Sustained outreach to American Latino museums and networks will be crucial for IMLS to stay up to date on new stakeholders and in relationship with potential ALHC applicants.

Listening-session participants, survey respondents, and interviewees stressed the importance of broadly investing significant and sustained effort in outreach and in relationship building with potential ALHC program applicants. They highlighted a number of activities that IMLS has undertaken for other programs. Examples include the following:

- Clear points of contact with program officers and TA providers who can provide potential grantees guidance on submitting successful grant applications and help museums reduce the number of one-off projects they need to pursue.

- Social-media outreach and use of Spanish- and Portuguese-language media (such as radio, social media, or television). IMLS is active on Twitter/X, although one interviewee noted that Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok are often more useful options for reaching wider audiences.

- Although IMLS already has a newsletter, one funder suggested that IMLS consider starting a newsletter focused on culturally specific museum spaces to share information about funding opportunities and success stories from grantees.

- Interviewees also noted in-person museum conferences and conventions as spaces where IMLS and other funders can intentionally reach out to American Latino–serving institutions.

- Multiple respondents suggested that IMLS conduct site visits to Latino museums to better understand their goals, challenges, needs, and successes. This level of outreach would also respond to a recommendation made by a number of listening-session participants for the ALHC program to intentionally reach out to and support younger and smaller museums.

Though IMLS already engages in a range of these outreach activities, these suggestions stress how important this sort of work is for the American Latino museum field.

What Considerations from Other Cultural Museums Can Inform the ALHC Program?

The experiences of African American museums that applied to IMLS's African American History and Culture program have relevance to the ALHC program's development. The legislation supporting the AAHC program served as a model for the legislation supporting the ALHC program, yet was enacted over 15 years earlier. In 2021, our Urban Institute colleagues completed a retrospective evaluation of the AAHC program's performance since its authorization (Ashley et al. 2021). That evaluation found that the AAHC grantees found the program valuable for supporting a range of initiatives and ratings from smaller grantees were generally highest, with many expressing that the program provided "a unique opportunity for African American museums that might otherwise be 'locked out' of the competitive grant programs that are open to larger pools of museums" (Ashley et al. 2021, 47). However, the evaluation found that 45 percent of the estimated eligible universe of potential grantees never applied, citing a lack of awareness.

This type of outreach is particularly important for American Latino museums that currently lack the unifying network that the Association of African American Museums has provided. That association has enabled participating museums to be in community with each other and to socialize regarding funding opportunities. With few exceptions, this kind of organizing infrastructure is absent among American Latino institutions, which could benefit from a similar national association, something that several collaborators and stakeholders interviewed for the present study mentioned. In interviews, a number of regional professional associations were mentioned that could collectively assist IMLS in conducting outreach to the field and in unifying American Latino museums more broadly. These included the National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures, the Western States Arts Federation, the Latino

Network of the American Alliance of Museums, and two HSI networks: the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institution Educators. During Urban's mapping of the American Latino museum space, we also identified 20 regional/state museum associations (e.g., Western Museums Association, Museum Association of New York); additionally, some interviewees mentioned that they were alumni of the Smithsonian's Latino Museum Studies program which they said had a vibrant alumni network.

> **Recommendation: To grow capacity and sustainability in the American Latino museum field, IMLS should facilitate and support opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and networking.**

Literature on the landscape of culturally specific museums and institutions that primarily serve people of color reflects both the value and enrichment these organizations bring to their communities and the inequities they face in operating (Helicon Collaborative 2017, 14). Although additional funding can redress some of these challenges—such as by enabling institutions to build up dedicated staff, maintain operations, market their services, and apply resources to exhibits and community engagement—funding alone cannot resolve deeply entrenched systemic inequities. This shows the potential importance of activating models that directly address systemic inequity, such as, for example, reparative efforts from older and better-resourced institutions to partner with smaller and mid-sized American Latino museums to support capacity building around grant acquisitions and investments.

Our community hits on a lot of cylinders that are not necessarily those that fit within this sort of capital "M" museum construct...For reasons historical, for reasons economic, for reasons of race, institutional racism, for all those reasons, we need to approach this work in a much more broad way to make sure that we're helping the institutions that are really doing the work and having the impact. If we don't do that, we're going to miss the boat.
—Interviewed collaborator

Lastly, changing perceptions of government institutions as inaccessible or harmful may help some organizations engage with them more productively. One interviewee noted her experience working in American Latino arts organizations in communities with large populations of people without legal

documentation, and their reluctance to engage with state funding or programming support out of concern for the safety of their core community constituents.

How Can IMLS Capitalize on Other Federal Models to Develop the ALHC Program?

Interviewed stakeholders identified several aspects of federal grantmaking that often presented challenges for American Latino museums, challenges they hoped IMLS could successfully navigate with the ALHC program. Somewhat fortuitously, IMLS has addressed many of the concerns stakeholders expressed in some of its existing grant programs so already has a model in place to potentially replicate; what remains is to convey that knowledge to ALHC program stakeholders.

First, interviewees recommended not requiring a 1:1 match for all funding awards, or making more explicit that donated services or in-kind contributions (rather than funding) could apply. This would lower barriers for smaller organizations that may opt out of funding opportunities entirely out of concern that they could not secure matching funds. As one interviewee noted, match requirements may assume that an organization has received funding from a wealthy donor, but many types of cultural institutions, such as heritage sites (which do not host exhibits as conventional museums do), may be less likely to engage with these donors. In fact, current IMLS language regarding cost shares indicates that "in-kind contributions, such as staff or volunteer time that support project activities," can apply. Of additional note, the IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture program offers a two-tiered funding structure; small project awards of $100,000 or less require no cost share, whereas large project awards require at least a 1:1 cost share (IMLS 2023a).

Additionally, one interviewee cautioned against "one size fits all" grant programs that are not tailored to the unique contexts of culturally specific institutions. They noted the value of developing a larger number of strategic, specialized grant programs for smaller and culturally specific museums. Two programs that interviewees mentioned are operated by IMLS: the Inspire! and Museums Empowered programs, both of which were developed to better suit the needs of priority prospective grantees. These can serve as vetted templates for future ALHC program grants. We also recall here the previously mentioned NEH program, Cultural and Community Resilience, which also aims to promote culturally representative work in the humanities.

IMLS can also use still-developing approaches to drafting agency equity action plans to identify innovative practices worth incorporating into its American Latino museum work. Under the Executive

Order on Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities through the Federal Government, released on January 20, 2021, US federal agencies were required to produce agency-level equity action plans to "assess whether, and to what extent, [their] programs and policies perpetuate systemic barriers to opportunities and benefits for people of color and underserved groups."[20] United States federal agencies naturally have a wide range of programming, funding, and mandates. For IMLS, this presents an opportunity to develop additional colearning opportunities with agencies, particularly the NEA and NEH, that have somewhat similar grantmaking structures.

Both the NEA and NEH have state councils that present challenges and opportunities for incorporating equity goals: these agencies have some level of decisionmaking autonomy over who they provide funding to, and can serve as useful conduits both for communications and identification of potential grantees. Ongoing equity action plan work could include laying out processes for identifying potential applicants and disseminating funds. Efforts here would also build on already existing relationships, such as the collaboration on the Save America's Treasures program between the National Park Service, NEA, NEH, and IMLS. IMLS might also benefit by following the NEH model to develop an internal Latino Museum Working Group that periodically assesses American Latino–focused efforts and responses from the field, so as to address opportunities of support and redirection in an ongoing way.

Lastly, IMLS could benefit from deeper engagement with other agencies, particularly the Department of Education. To date, there have been informal contacts but limited formal programming efforts between the agencies designed to build a pipeline of future museum professionals in the American Latino museum space. There are also contacts through the President's Advisory Commission on Advancing Educational Equity, Excellence, and Economic Opportunity for Hispanics, and IMLS efforts will benefit from building on ongoing engagement with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and the Alliance of Hispanic Serving Institution Educators. Although the HSI designation does not itself indicate that a particular postsecondary institution has any active programming or museum work focused on American Latino history, culture, or the arts, the aforementioned associations can provide links to institutional contacts at HSIs and other postsecondary institutions that will help IMLS communicate and refine its approach to its fellowship efforts and more directly engage with the specific needs of museums located *within* these larger institutions. Collectively, these opportunities for future collaborations between IMLS and other agencies in the federal space offer much hope for the growth and sustainability of the ALHC program.

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[20] For an examination of these plans, see Rekha Balu, Danielle DeRuiter-Williams, Bryan J. Cook, Madeline Baxter, and Travis Reginal, "Pathways to Equity at Scale: A Synthesis of the 2022 Federal Equity Action Plans and Recommendations for 2023 Plans," (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2023).

Summary

Many of the reflections, takeaways, and recommendations offered by those who participated in Urban's listening sessions, survey, and interviews for this study are relevant beyond the immediate field of American Latino museums. That said, the unique characteristics and potential of the American Latino museum field point to certain intersecting themes, focused around outreach and inclusivity, acknowledging the diversity of the field, and accounting for the relatively large share of smaller, newer, and community-engaged museums. The recommendations made throughout this report highlight both the importance of IMLS maintaining and expanding on existing outreach and support efforts and the ways in which the ALHC program could be structured to best engage with the American Latino museum field. At the level of the four main sections of the report, themes that emerged include the following:

- **Understanding the American Latino museum field**: The ALHC program presents an opportunity to intentionally elevate the diversity and growth of the American Latino museum sector while accommodating newer institutional forms (such as cultural centers) found in the American Latino museum space and finding ways to equitably incorporate institutions (such as other museums or HSIs) that may be interested in playing a more active role.

- **Assessing funding experiences of American Latino museums**: Different museums have different strengths, capacities, and needs. Smaller and newer American Latino museums have less capacity and familiarity with federal grant opportunities, including those through IMLS. Targeting efforts to lower barriers for these institutions, including increased outreach and culturally responsive support, will help IMLS broaden the uptake of the ALHC program opportunity and support potential applicants throughout the grant application process.

- **Growing the capacity of American Latino museums**: American Latino museums would benefit greatly from increased opportunities for networking and knowledge sharing to promote collaborations and learn from each other's experiences and knowledge. IMLS should ensure that its theory of change for the ALHC program aligns with those implicit in potential grantees and develop clear and flexible pathways for tracking progress and measuring impact.

- **Implementing the ALHC program**: IMLS should incorporate a wide set of outreach and communications approaches intentional to engaging American Latino museums and continue to iterate on approaches to make itself known to potential applicants. It remains equally important for IMLS to account for the specific histories and contexts of American Latino museums to ensure an equitable and inclusive ALHC program.

American Latino museums hold great value for preserving a large part of US history and promoting cultural equity across US communities, and the ALHC program offers real hope for growing the field exponentially in the 21st century and beyond.

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