



Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-00-14-0029-14

Spelman College Museum of Fine Art

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$62,000
Amount of cost share:	\$62,198

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art requests a grant from the Institute of Museums and Library Services in the amount of \$62,000 to complete **Blueprint 2016**, a development and planning project that includes three interconnected components: 1) leadership coaching for the Director of the Museum 2) strategic planning and 3) professional development for the Museum staff. The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is the only museum in the nation with the express mission to emphasize art by and about women of the African Diaspora. Its operations have historically been informed by three distinct factors: Spelman College's strategic plan, stakeholder responses, and museum best practices. Now, as the Museum approaches its 20th anniversary in 2016, it seeks to work with the Matthews Consulting Group (MCG) from September 2014 to August 31, 2015 to complete **Blueprint 2016**—a project that will equip the Museum staff with essential resources that will help improve its ability to engage, expand, and serve its audiences.

The Museum will work with MCG to accomplish the three overarching goals of **Blueprint 2016**: 1) Create a tailor-made leadership opportunity for Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., the Director of the Museum. A one-on-one coaching experience will position her to more effectively engage with the senior leadership of the College, manage the Museum's competing priorities, adapt to shifting patterns in the field, and equip her with the skills necessary to lead the Museum into its 20th year. 2) Develop and create the Museum's first Strategic Plan. This three-year plan will be informed by an array of stakeholders (students, staff, faculty, alumnae, visitors, patrons, colleagues from peer institutions), concise, clear, and flexible. This roadmap will guide the staff, align resources to ensure effective execution, and provide the focus required to define the Museum's future goals and objectives, expand the Museum's capacities, and shape its institutional future. 3) Create a Staff Development Action Plan that is informed by the Museum staff's interest in acquiring specific skills and expanding knowledge and also responsive to findings that will be revealed through the strategic planning process. Through this process the Museum will enhance existing skills and acquire new ones as necessary.

Blueprint 2016 is extensive in scope and mirrors the thoughtful approach and ambition that the Museum staff regularly demonstrates. While the proactive project schedule is demanding and rigorous, the staff commitment, accountability measures such as regularly scheduled meetings and project-related assignments as monitored by MCG will ensure that the stated outcomes are reached within the designated time frame. Built in provisions such as regularly scheduled check in calls and group discussions will make it possible to course correct if necessary. The Museum staff and MCG will monitor the project to ensure that each of the three components as well as the three action plans that it will deliver are SMART (specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, and timebound).

Blueprint 2016 is in alignment with IMLS's goal to strengthen the knowledge, skills, and other expertise of the current staff of African American museums. The Museum staff, the Spelman College community, current audiences, and future audiences will benefit from its successful completion. The Museum will share its findings with all of the focus group participants and peer institutions that were involved. Likewise, the Museum staff will enthusiastically serve as a sounding board for other cultural institutions that seek advice and feedback as they strategically plan their growth. A summary of the final strategic plan will be added to the Museum's website.

The successful completion of **Blueprint 2016** will strengthen the staff's ability to think strategically, plan methodically for future growth, identify essential tools that will strengthen the Museum's operations, and enhance its institutional capacity to serve as an academic and cultural resource and deliver comprehensive art experiences for its growing audiences.

Project Justification

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art requests a grant in the amount of \$62,000 to complete **Blueprint 2016**, a development and planning project that includes three interconnected components: 1) leadership coaching for the Director of the Museum 2) strategic planning and 3) professional development for the Museum staff.

The Spelman College Museum of Fine Art is located on the campus of Spelman College, a historically Black college and a global leader in the education of women of African descent located in Atlanta, Georgia. The Museum was established in 1996 and is located in the Camille Olivia Hanks Cosby, Ed.D., Academic Center. It is the only museum in the nation with the express mission to emphasize art by and about women of the African Diaspora. The Museum's operations have historically been informed by three distinct factors: Spelman College's strategic plan, stakeholder responses, and museum best practices. Now, as the Museum approaches its 20th anniversary in 2016, it seeks to embark upon **Blueprint 2016**—a project that will strengthen the staff's ability to think strategically and implement plans that are innovative and woven into their day-to-day activities. Participating in the activities outlined in **Blueprint 2016** will help the Museum staff develop measurable goals and serve its growing audience.

The Museum is part of the Division of Academic Affairs at Spelman College. Its priorities are presenting impactful mission-focused exhibitions, organizing meaningful programs, and growing the permanent collection. Welcoming more than 12,000 visitors each year, the Museum is vital to communities beyond the Spelman campus. As its growing audiences and critical reviews demonstrate, the Museum's offerings expand the visual arts ecology of Atlanta, the region, and beyond.

Blueprint 2016 is informed by the premise that equipping the Museum's staff with advanced skills is intimately linked to shaping the vision for the Museum's future. For this reason, **Blueprint 2016** is a custom-made matrix of extensive one-on-one leadership coaching, a strategic planning process, and professional development for the Museum staff. The framework for this plan is based on the tenet that deliberately focusing on the individual and collective professional development needs of the Museum staff and completing the strategic plan are interconnected keys to future organizational success. Ensuring that the Museum is organizationally strong will increase the Museum's capacity to serve as an academic and cultural resource that expands knowledge about and access to art by and about Black women artists.

The Museum has been methodically planning for this phase of its evolution since 2011 when it asked Matthews Consulting Group (MCG) to conduct focus groups as a means of understanding stakeholder impressions. This process provided essential feedback and revealed that visibility and programming were critical areas for growth. Responding to the recommendations articulated through that process, the Museum has taken deliberate action steps. Three such activities bearing fruit are a heightened online presence, the establishment of a Curator of Education position, and the creation of a National Advisory Council. As a direct result, the Museum has experienced tangible improvements including launching a new web site, heightening social media efforts, increasing the focus on public programs, meeting the increased demand for tours across all demographic groups, improving the quality of programs as evident from participant responses, increasing the diversity of programs beyond gallery walks, artist lectures, and other traditional museum programs, greater community buy in, and an improved ability to respond

to requests for private access from both Spelman stakeholders and audiences beyond the immediate College community.

Completing the focus group project in 2011 with MCG ultimately armed the Museum staff with new skills and instilled great pride. Now, more than ever, the Museum staff is prepared to embark upon a comprehensive planning and development project. It is committed to carrying out the tasks, responsibilities, and activities to future-proof its operations. It is keenly aware that in order to build upon the institution's forward momentum, it must now fortify itself with advanced leadership skills, engage in a formal and comprehensive strategic planning process, and invest in staff professional development. **Blueprint 2016** will give the Museum staff the tools to integrate strategic thinking into operational practice, incrementally increase its audience over time, provide a roadmap for future growth, and improve its capacity to align our mission, values, and objectives. Moreover, these important organizational advancements will benefit the Black women artists and their work as well as students, researchers, scholars, and general audiences for generations to come.

2. Project Work Plan

All components of **Blueprint 2016**—leadership coaching, strategic planning, and staff development—will be completed between September 1, 2014 and August 31, 2015. The rapport the Museum established with the MCG in 2011 during the successful focus group project provides a strong foundation for MCG to continue to work with the Museum staff to complete the components of the **Blueprint 2016**. While Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., Director of the Museum, is the principal investigator of **Blueprint 2016**, Michelle Matthews, the president of MCG, will provide leadership and manage the delivery of professional services to ensure the stated outcomes are reached within the designated time frame.

Leadership Coaching (Activities 1 – 4)

Blueprint 2016 is informed by the principle that there is a direct link between leadership and organizational development. Dr. Brownlee has participated in nationally recognized programs for museum professionals including the Getty Leadership Institute and professional development sessions, which are offered during the Association of Art Museum Directors meetings. Such programs provide access to leadership professionals, case study methods, and networking opportunities that are invaluable. However, at this phase in her professional development, a tailor-made experiential development opportunity will provide even more benefits. A one-on-one coaching experience will position Dr. Brownlee to more effectively engage with the senior leadership of the College, manage the Museum's competing priorities, and adapt to shifting patterns in the field. Such an opportunity will also equip her with the skills necessary to lead the Museum into its 20th year. Traditional leadership coaching strategies including 360 assessments, monthly coaching sessions, and progress reviews, which require thoughtful self-reflection and feedback will be the foundation of the process. However, in contrast with other off-site professional development opportunities, this customized course of action will afford the opportunity to practice new behaviors and skills in real time, benefit from increased accountability, and put leadership theory into practice.

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Activity 1 (assess and evaluate): In September 2014, MCG will administer a 360 assessment process that includes self, direct-report, supervisor, and peer evaluations of Dr. Brownlee. The evaluations will be completed, collected, synthesized, and summarized.

Activity 2 (leadership action planning): In October and November 2014, Dr. Brownlee and MCG will review the results of the 360 assessment and create a Leadership Action Plan to address identified areas of improvement. The Leadership Action Plan will also be reviewed with the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dr. Brownlee's direct supervisor, to ensure the development areas will support Museum and College goals and objectives. The Leadership Action Plan will include a meaningful Museum-related assignment that should be completed within six months (by May 2015). They will also determine what resources, timelines, and benchmarks will be required in order to ensure the successful completion of the assignment.

Activity 3 (present the plan and guided assignment): Between December 2014 and April 2015, Dr. Brownlee will participate in one-on-one monthly coaching sessions to implement the Leadership Action Plan. During this guided phase she will be required to formulate and utilize new institution-building skills, maintain a professional journal, take professional risks, and discuss the progress she is making on the assignment during monthly check in conversations with MCG.

Activity 4 (delivery, implementation, and assessment): June 2015 MCG and Dr. Brownlee will evaluate her assignment, amend the Leadership Action Plan as necessary, and establish agreed upon goals, next steps, benchmarks, and milestones. In July 2015, MCG and Dr. Brownlee will complete and present the final Leadership Action Plan to the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and discuss any feedback regarding its implementation during an August 2015 meeting. Dr. Brownlee will be equipped with the tools that are required to fully implement the Plan. While the project formally ends in August 2015, Dr. Brownlee will have brief bimonthly check in calls through December 2015 to discuss progress and any setbacks.

Strategic planning (Activities 5 – 10)

The Museum is staffed by three additional full-time staff members: Anne Collins Smith, the Curator of Collections; Makeba Dixon-Hill, the Curator of Education; and Wyatt Phillips, the Administrative Assistant. The Museum staff is committed to building upon the lessons learned from the 2011 focus group project and is prepared to engage in a process along with Spelman College students, faculty, staff, volunteers, alumnae, patrons, and members of the National Advisory Council to develop and create a clear yet flexible strategic roadmap. This informed and concise three-year Strategic Plan will guide the staff and align resources to ensure effective execution. This broad and collective thinking will provide the focus required to help the Museum staff shape the Museum's future goals and objectives, expand its capacities, and deliberately guide its institutional future.

Activity 5 (review and plan/concurrent with Activity 1): In October 2014 MCG will review the feedback from the 2011 focus groups, identify strategic issues to address during the planning process, identify

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individuals and institutional peers to include in the environmental scan, and develop information gathering methods and questions.

Activity 6 (environmental scan): Between November 2014 to January 2015, MCG will coordinate and convene three focus groups with key stakeholders including the senior staff of the College, current champions of the Museum, and arts enthusiasts with limited knowledge of the Museum. It will also revisit findings from 2011 by convening a focus group for students, staff, faculty, and alumnae. These sessions will provide a lens through which to consider and analyze specific perceptions about the Museum, its staff, and its offerings.

During this time it will also conduct an environmental scan of peer institutions including museums at historically black colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges, cultural institutions that were established within the last 25 years, and women's colleges. By interviewing key staff members and reviewing the organizational structures of those institutions, MCG will consider best practices in the field and provide a framework through which the Museum can compare and assess its progress over time.

Activity 7 (synthesize and present findings): In February 2015 MCG will analyze and synthesize all of the information gathered during the environmental scan process. MCG will provide Dr. Brownlee with status updates throughout the process and present comprehensive findings at a Museum staff meeting in early March 2015.

Activity 8 (plan and facilitate): In March and April 2015 MCG will plan and facilitate working sessions with the Museum staff to develop strategic initiatives and plan milestones, high-level action plans, and accountabilities.

Activity 9 (write and deliver): In May 2015 MCG will write and deliver the Museum's Strategic Plan.

Activity 10 (implement): From June to July 2015 the Museum will put the Strategic Plan into action by reconnecting with stakeholders to involve them in specific tasks included in the Strategic Plan. MCG and the Museum staff will schedule monthly conversations to assess progress and discuss any areas requiring revision or refining. In August 2015 MCG, the Museum staff, and participants will be invited to reflect on the process and discuss the strengths and areas for growth.

Staff Development (Activities 11 and 12)

The entire Museum staff will be engaged throughout the strategic planning process. The Museum staff members are highly attuned to the benefits of discovering, sharpening, and acquiring skills and expanding knowledge and are, therefore, eager to invest in their professional development. They are guided by the fact that learning opportunities to broaden their personal and collective development will increase the Museum's ability to fully realize its objectives. The Museum staff views professional development as a forward-thinking proactive measure to develop individual and collective talent and has

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already identified several specific tasks that it would like to address through the staff development process including: creating innovative strategies to engage with peers within their specific fields; acquiring skills to motivate the extensive corps of 77 volunteers in a manner that maximizes productivity; and learning behaviors that will enable it to remain nimble in order to adapt to emerging trends in the field. It is fully aware that additional findings will be revealed through the strategic

planning process and welcomes the challenge of enhancing and expanding existing skills. For these reasons the Museum staff is committed to working with experts that will help develop their existing individual talents, harness their collective skills, and identify essential tools that will strengthen the Museum's operations. The following activities focus on planning ahead to meet growing audience demands and preparing to shepherd the Museum into its 20th anniversary.

Activity 11 (assess and evaluate/concurrent with activities 1 and 5): In October 2014 MCG will conduct an extensive staff assessment through an interview process aimed at assisting individual staff members with determining his or her self-perception, including perceived strengths and areas for growth. Individual sessions will be conducted with each staff member to review assessment data. Additionally, a group session will be conducted to help identify opportunities for collective growth as a staff. While MCG will not develop a Staff Development Action Plan until June 2015, findings from the initial staff assessment will help to inform the strategic planning process, provide insights to help develop environmental scan questions, and provide opportunities for short-term improvements that will quickly benefit the Museum and its operations.

Activity 12 (deliver, implement, practice and assess): MCG will advise the Museum staff regarding findings throughout the strategic planning process. However, in June 2015 a high level Staff Development Action Plan will be developed to align with the strategic priorities identified in the strategic plan. The Staff Development Action Plan will outline methods, development action steps, skill sets that will be required to accomplish specific tasks, frameworks for seeking feedback, benchmarks, and resources required.

The Staff Development Plan will also outline staff development project(s) for each staff member. These projects will advance the implementation of the strategic plan and at the same time help staff to develop new skillsets necessary to further the Museum's transformation.

The Museum staff will begin formally implementing the Plan in July and in August it will participate in a working session to assess initial progress. While the project formally ends in August 2015 the Museum staff will have brief bimonthly check in calls through December 2015 to discuss progress and address any setbacks.

Spelman College will contribute \$62,198.08, which accounts for the following:

- Salary and fringe for Andrea Barnwell Brownlee (Director, 20%):
- Salary and fringe for Anne Collins Smith (Curator of Collections, 12%):
- Salary and fringe for Makeba Dixon-Hill (Curator of Education, 12%):
- Salary and fringe for Wyatt Phillips (Administrative Assistant, 12%):

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- Project Supplies: \$654
- Indirect costs (institutional negotiated government rate of 60%): \$19,852.93

The Museum requests \$62,000 from IMLS to support:

- Consultant fees for Matthews Consulting Group: \$60,000
- Travel for key personnel to participate in IMLS meeting: \$2,000

Project Result

Blueprint 2016 mirrors the thoughtful approach and ambition regularly demonstrated by the Museum staff. **Blueprint 2016** will equip the Museum staff with essential resources that will help improve its ability to engage, expand, and serve future audiences. It is in alignment with IMLS's goal to enhance institutional capacity and sustainability. It focuses on developing and strengthening the knowledge and skills of the current staff of the Spelman College Museum of Fine Art and will fortify the institution with the tools that it needs to remain viable for generations to come.

One result of **Blueprint 2016** will be the completion of the three intertwined and complementary Plans that reflect a SMART model (i.e. specific, measurable, action oriented, realistic, and timebound). The Leadership Action Plan that involves guided leadership coaching and related activities will result in shifting perceptions about Dr. Brownlee. While she is widely respected and has a national reputation, she is also viewed as intensely focused and unintentionally isolated from her peers within the College. Helping her to address specific behaviors in her leadership style that contribute to these perceptions will help her become a collaborative thought leader who is highly engaged and forward thinking.

The Strategic Plan—the Museum's first—will result in increased buy-in as determined by their interest and willingness to participate in the environmental scan activities and in the implementation activities of the plan. It will align with the College's strategic plan, provide a framework for the institution's growth, and include data to help the Museum evaluate itself in concert with its peers. The process of completing the Plan will result in bringing measurable goals into critical focus and strengthening the staff's ability to think and operate strategically keeping innovative growth top of mind. Completing and following the Strategic Plan will have a long-term impact on the Museum. An overwhelming number of competitive grants require applicants to have a current Strategic Plan. Consequently, this living document will better position the Museum to secure future resources and financial support.

The process of developing a Staff Development Action Plan that assesses audience needs and develops new skillsets, promises to maximize productivity and stretch individual and collective staff talent. While it promises to reveal and sharpen skills of each of the individual staff members, at the same time, it will enable the staff to use their skills and knowledge to advance the Museum. The Museum celebrates a host of pride points including securing awards from nationally recognized foundations such as The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, the Henry Luce Foundation, the Peter Norton Family Foundation, and the Getty Foundation. It was also selected as the first institution from the United States that jointly (along with the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston) represented the United States at the

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2012 Havana Biennial in Havana, Cuba. Additionally, Dr. Brownlee is the recipient of the prestigious 2013 David C. Driskell Prize in African American Art and Art History. The Museum is actively building upon forward momentum and preparing for future accomplishments. It has set its sights on the important milestone of applying for museum accreditation through the American Alliance of Museums in 2016. The significance of creating and following a Staff Development Action Plan that will maximize the staff's ability to work in lock step and position the institution to rise to greater challenges in the future cannot be overestimated.

The three tangible Plans will serve as living resources that the staff and stakeholders can consult, revisit, and revise on a regular basis.

The long-term impact of **Blueprint 2016** will be to dramatically increase the Museum's productivity. The coordination of the three sub-projects into one cohesive project will involve the entire staff and reap benefits beyond the conclusion of the grant. By design the Leadership Action Plan, the Strategic Plan, and the Staff Development Action Plan require the Museum staff to expand the scope of its communication, broaden the Museum's circle of allies, and integrate challenging individual staff activities into the process to hone and amplify their current professional habits. This project demands integrating taking safe yet effective risks, encouraging practice projects early in the process, and increasing communication beyond the Museum staff. Each custom made Plan will make involving stakeholders in broad and direct ways routine.

Blueprint 2016 will be a template for proactive planning and institution building. The Museum will share its findings with all focus group participants and peer institutions that provided feedback during the process. Likewise, the Museum staff will enthusiastically serve as a sounding board for other cultural institutions that seek advice and feedback as they plan their futures. A summary of the final Strategic Plan will be added to the Museum's website. As such, the Museum will be an academic and cultural resource, which is steeped in future-thinking, planning, and development that delivers comprehensive art experiences for its growing audiences.

Spelman College Museum of Fine Art
 Schedule of Completion
 2014 - 2015

