

## **FAQ**

### **IMLS Museum Services Grants FY 2013**

#### **Context**

IMLS has adopted a new strategic plan for 2012-2016, "Creating a Nation of Learners," which specifies three programmatic goals. In FY 13, all IMLS grant programs will support the following goals:

1. IMLS places the learner at the center and supports engaging experiences in libraries and museums that prepare people to be full participants in their local communities and our global society.
2. IMLS promotes museums and libraries as strong community anchors that enhance civic engagement, cultural opportunities, and economic vitality.
3. IMLS supports exemplary stewardship of museum and library collections and promotes the use of technology to facilitate discovery of knowledge and cultural heritage.

The reauthorization of the Museum and Library Services Act was the foundation for the new strategic plan. The plan was created taking into account perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders including input from 1,400 people who participated in an online town hall.

The new strategic plan combined with an analysis of past funding patterns for IMLS museum grant programs has resulted in a budget request for FY 2013 that proposes several changes.

#### **Combine Purposes and Funding for Museums for America and Conservation Project Support**

IMLS is combining the funding and purposes of Conservation Project Support (CPS) and Museums for America (MFA). In light of the findings of the recently published evaluation of MFA, the expanded program will continue to fund the types of projects that MFA has funded in the past as well as the types of projects that CPS has funded. This will allow for a more comprehensive approach to project design for many proposals. Applicants will be asked to align their project proposals with one or more of the agency's programmatic goals.

#### **What benefit will be gained by doing this?**

**Provide greater opportunity to support the core conservation and collections care functions of museums.**

- The level of funding for CPS has remained relatively the same for more than twenty years.
- Supporting the conservation/collections care needs of museums is a primary purpose of IMLS and a core component of the IMLS strategic plan. In fact, during the strategic planning process, comments submitted to the IMLS virtual town hall underscored the importance of collections.
- Moving CPS in with MFA makes it possible for the full range of conservation and collections care needs to be met within one program with greater resources than before.

## **Reduce confusion about which program funds which types of projects.**

- The distinction between funding “collections care” in one grant opportunity (MFA) and “conservation” in another (CPS) has been difficult for applicants to navigate.
  - Currently, applicants must limit MFA applications to projects for collections management activities such as cataloging, inventory, registration, and digitization.
  - CPS applicants are focused on conservation of collections including surveys, environmental improvements and treatment.
  - Recognition that many proposals are best designed with elements of each in the project design, e.g., moving and inventorying collections and also rehousing or making environmental improvements.

## **Combine Purposes and Funding for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum Professionals and National Leadership Grants**

IMLS is combining the funding and purposes of 21st Century Museum Professionals (21 MP) and National Leadership Grants (NLG). The new NLG will continue to fund projects that are similar to the projects that NLG and 21 MP funded in the past. Applicants will be asked to align their project proposals with one or more of the agency’s programmatic goals.

### **What benefit will be gained by doing this?**

**Provide greater ability to support high-quality projects.**

Demand for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Museum Professionals has far exceeded available funding.

**Reduce confusion about definition of “innovation and national leadership” that has been a barrier to supporting projects with good potential impact.**

We will be examining the current definitions of “national leadership,” and we will focus on supporting projects with far reaching impact that influence practice throughout the museum profession and on developing models and resources that can be shared.

## **Summary**

### **What will stay the same? We will continue to**

- achieve a funding portfolio that includes all types and sizes of museums, guided by new language in the Museum Services Act: “to ensure museums of various types and sizes in diverse geographic regions of the United States are afforded attention and support;”
- fund projects that are similar to projects we have supported in the past but through a structure that is easier to understand and navigate;

- support assessments, planning, conservation, collections care, digitization, research, exhibits, education and public programs, leadership, training, and organizational capacity building;
- promote and require a progressive approach to the stewardship of collections backed up by strategic planning and conservation priorities for each applicant institution;
- define “museum” as including aquariums, arboretums, art museums, botanical gardens, children’s/youth museums, general museums, historic houses/sites, history museums, natural history/anthropology museums, nature centers, planetariums, science/technology centers, specialized museums, and zoological parks; and
- use the same eligibility requirements so that entities that were eligible for particular types of projects in the past will continue to be eligible to apply for funding for those projects in the future.

### **What about other IMLS museum programs? We will continue to**

- offer grants for African American History and Culture and the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services,
- award the National Medals for Museum Service to honor outstanding institutions that make exceptional contributions to their communities,
- post application descriptions and guidelines on our Web site and hold pre-application Webinars,
- use Grants.gov as the application portal,
- use a peer-review process for evaluating applications.

### **So what will be different? We will**

- have one deadline (January 15, 2013) for all four museum grant programs; draft grant guidelines for the new MFA and NLG will be available for public comment in early May, 2012; final guidelines will be available no later than October 15, 2012,
- accept multiple grant applications from eligible institutions for each grant program, and
- have fewer application guidelines with better descriptions.