

Dear Colleague:

Enclosed please find sample narratives, schedules of completion, and summary budget forms from 20 successful applications from the 2009 and 2010 IMLS Museums for America (MFA) grant competitions. These samples represent different types of projects from successful grantees in the three categories: Engaging Communities, Building Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship. They emphasize ties to the organizational strategic plan, sustainability, and the long term benefits to the institution and its community. Each of the samples was selected to illustrate a specific aspect of a good application, as described below:

Engaging Communities

**Massachusetts Audubon Society** is an example of a well-developed project, with a precise and thoughtfully constructed project plan that implements key accessibility and inclusion goals into eight different sites. The project shows a solid understanding of audience needs and articulates the action steps necessary to reach the goals of the organization's strategic plan.

**New York Hall of Science** is an example of a project that is clearly focused on community collaboration and generating a new audience base. The institution has a clear perspective on the demographics of its community and offers a clearly outlined evaluation plan to ensure project goals are meeting community needs.

**Orange County Museum of Art** is as an example of a Web site revitalization project that is both timely and appropriate for the institution and will clearly advance its mission. The proposal successfully shows a plan for sustainability of project goals following the end of the grant period.

**Regents of the University of California, Davis Arboretum** is an excellent example of a project that is clear in its ties to both the strategic and long-range plans of the institution. The application was commended by reviewers for the time allotted for unforeseen events, a strong evaluation component, and active community involvement.

**Robert Treat Paine Historical Trust, Stonehurst** is an example of a well-written, concise application that builds upon prior projects which continue to advance the interpretation plan set out by the institution. The application clearly outlines the impact this project will have for future visitors.

**Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, Steadman Gallery** is an example of a meticulously planned project that highlights a strong collaboration plan with a school system. The proposal clearly shows the positive impact the project will have on its intended audience.

**University of Texas, Austin, Texas Natural Science Center** is an example of a project that demonstrates a strong plan for evaluation and staff training. Demographics of the intended audience have been well-researched and the impact the project will have on this demographic is clearly stated.

### Building Institutional Capacity

**Gulf Coast Heritage Association** is an example of a straight-forward and clearly designed plan to improve museum efficiency and staff productivity. The application demonstrates a strong sense of the timeline and staff resources needed to complete each of the project goals.

**Children's Museum of Rutherford County** is an example of a straightforward approach to enhancing existing technology to build capacity and improve the museum experience for visitors. This project clearly ties to the museum's strategic goals and clearly shows how it will assist the museum to understand and serve its community.

**Bostonian Society** is an example of a well-written and clearly designed project. This project shows a clear understanding of the current and future needs of the applicant regarding the interpretation of Boston, and exhibits a cohesive approach on multiple levels – staff, board, and other institutional partners – to address these current and future needs.

**International Center of Photography** is an example of a well-planned, thoughtfully considered project. The project ties nicely to the Museum's strategic goals and long-term growth, and instilled confidence in reviewers that the results will enhance institutional capacity.

**Mohonk Preserve** is an example of a well-written application and well-planned project that will clearly reach new and current audiences more effectively. The carefully designed proposal demonstrated the needs of the institution and successfully presented how the institution will build upon existing surveys to meet established goals and attract new audiences.

**Zoological Society of Cincinnati** is an example of a project that builds upon existing programming to successfully meet the current and future needs of the institution. Particular strengths of the proposal were its well-defined dissemination and evaluation plans as well as its explanation of how the project will create systemic change needed within the organization.

### Collections Stewardship

**Goldstein Museum of Design at the University of Minnesota** is an example of a project that is clearly laid out, detailed, and very nicely tied to strategic planning goals. It also demonstrates excellent justification for scheduling, materials, budget, and projected staffing levels. A compelling case is also made for the impact this project will have on the museum staff, students of design, and lifelong learners.

**Center for Book Arts** is an example of a proposal that clearly ties the goals of its project to the Museums for America goals, and shows how this will increase capacity long-term. A convincing case is made for how digitization of the collections will provide a rich source of educational material to a broad range of students, scholars, and lifelong learners.

**American Textile History Museum** is an example of a proposal that clearly shows the next steps needed to continue an ongoing project at the museum. The project design is well-written and clearly demonstrates how the project will improve the museum's intellectual control of and access to its collection.

**Maine Historical Society** is an example of a proposal that clearly expresses how the project is pivotal to the institution's long-term plans and ties back to the strategic plan. The project outline clearly shows how intellectual control and increased dissemination will be accomplished for this collection.

**Mount Holyoke College Art Museum** is an example of a well-written proposal that makes a strong case for the need of the stated project activities. The goals of the project are well-stated, attainable, set within a realistic timeframe, and clearly tie back to the museum's strategic goals.

**Kalamazoo Institute of Arts** is an example of a project that is clearly identified as a priority within the institutional strategic plan, is well-conceived and thoughtfully planned, and includes a strong work plan, clear budget, and well-qualified staff.

**Newark Museum** is an example of a project that reflects a philosophical change in the institution's approach to its collection. The narrative clearly demonstrates why this is the right project for this institution at this time and offers a strong argument for how the project will have impact both internally and externally.

I hope these sample narratives will be useful to you as models for structuring a proposal for your institutional needs. Please contact either Sandra Narva at (202) 653-4634, [snarva@imls.gov](mailto:snarva@imls.gov); Steve Shwartzman at (202) 653-4641, [sshwartzman@imls.gov](mailto:sshwartzman@imls.gov); Reagan Moore at (202) 653-4637, [rmoore@imls.gov](mailto:rmoore@imls.gov); or Allison Boals at (202) 653-4702, [aboals@imls.gov](mailto:aboals@imls.gov) if you have any questions. We would be happy to assist you and discuss any questions you have as you develop your proposal. The application deadline for the 2011 Museums for America grant program is November 1, 2010.

Applications for MFA are available from the Grants.gov Web site ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)). We look forward to receiving your application.

Sincerely,

The Museums for America Team