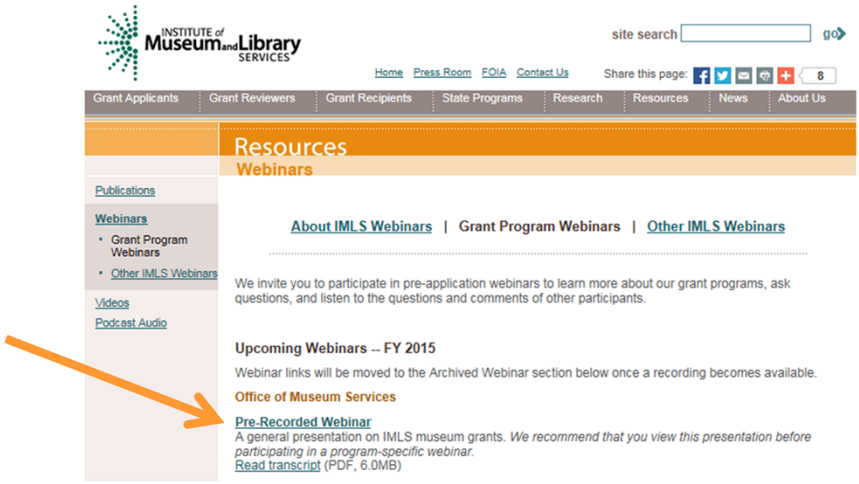
Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, "Museums for America Grant Program Fiscal Year 2015 Information Session."

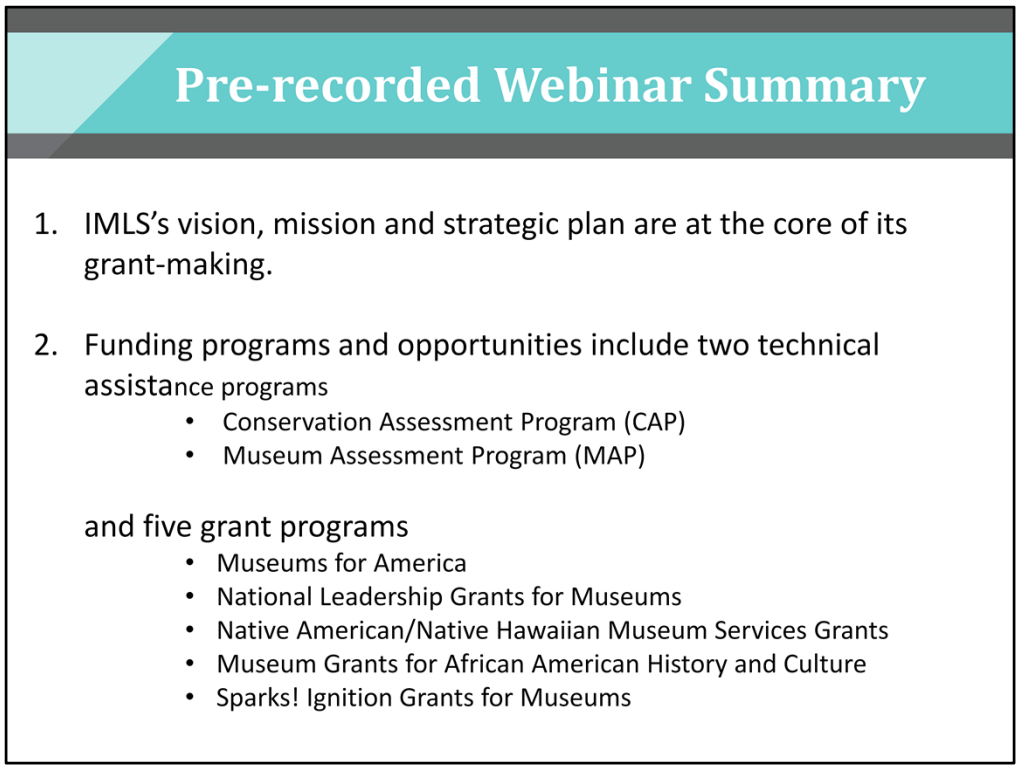
My name is Connie Bodner, and on behalf of Reagan Moore, Mark Feitl, and Katherine Maas, who are online today too, we're delighted that you are interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Museums for America grant program.

Pre-recorded Webinar



http://www.imls.gov/resources/grant_program_webinars.aspx

If you have not viewed our pre-recorded introductory webinar about IMLS's funding opportunities, we strongly recommend that you do so at your earliest convenience. You can access it at any time by going to the Resources: Webinar page and clicking on the link shown here.



As a quick summary, in that webinar, we discussed IMLS's vision, mission and strategic plan which are at the core of our grant-making. You would be well-served to consider these in thinking about your project for which you will be seeking IMLS support.

We also talked about all of IMLS's funding programs and opportunities. which include two technical assistance programs (CAP, MAP) and five grant programs: Museums for America, National Leadership Grants for Museums, Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Grants, Museum Grants for African American History and Culture, and Sparks! Ignition Grants for Museums.

We reviewed the eligibility requirements for each grant program and provided staff contacts and links to Notices of Funding Opportunities.

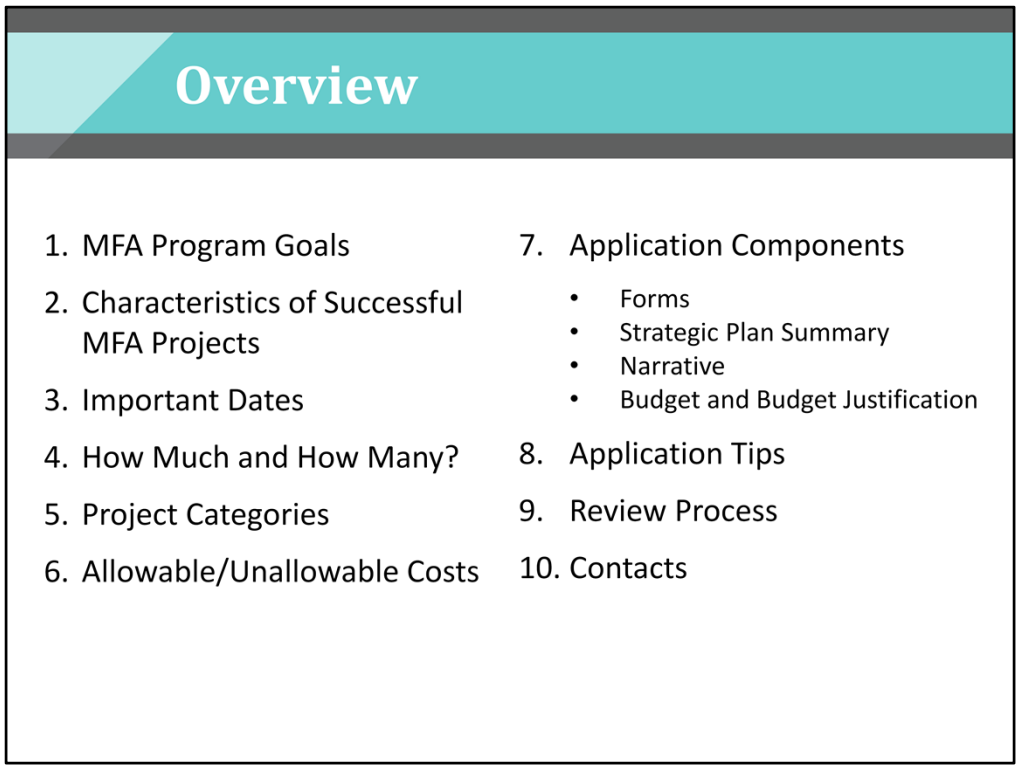
We covered registration requirements, which are critical to the application process. So critical, in fact, that we'll address that again here. It is very important to get a DUNS number and to register early with both SAM.gov and Grants.gov. In addition, you must make sure that your registration with SAM.gov stays current throughout the entire process of application, award making, and project execution. If it expires at any point along the way, we might not be able to accept your application, move it through the review process, make an award, or transfer grant funds to you, so don't forget to renew.

And lastly, we encouraged potential applicants to view the webinar for each program to which they might want to apply.

FY2014 Museums for America

	Number of Applications	Number of Awards	Funds Requested	Funds Awarded
Learning Experiences	280	101	$30,311,069	$11,455,040
Community Anchors	69	18	$7,454,024	$1,911,638
Collections Stewardship	205	77	$18,808,476	$7,038,533
TOTAL	554	196	$56,573,569	$20,405,211

We are often asked about numbers of applications and funding success rates, and so here are the figures for the FY2014 grant cycle. As you can see, with $20,405,211 available, we were able to fund 35% of the applications we received. That varies from year to year, but this is within the typical range.



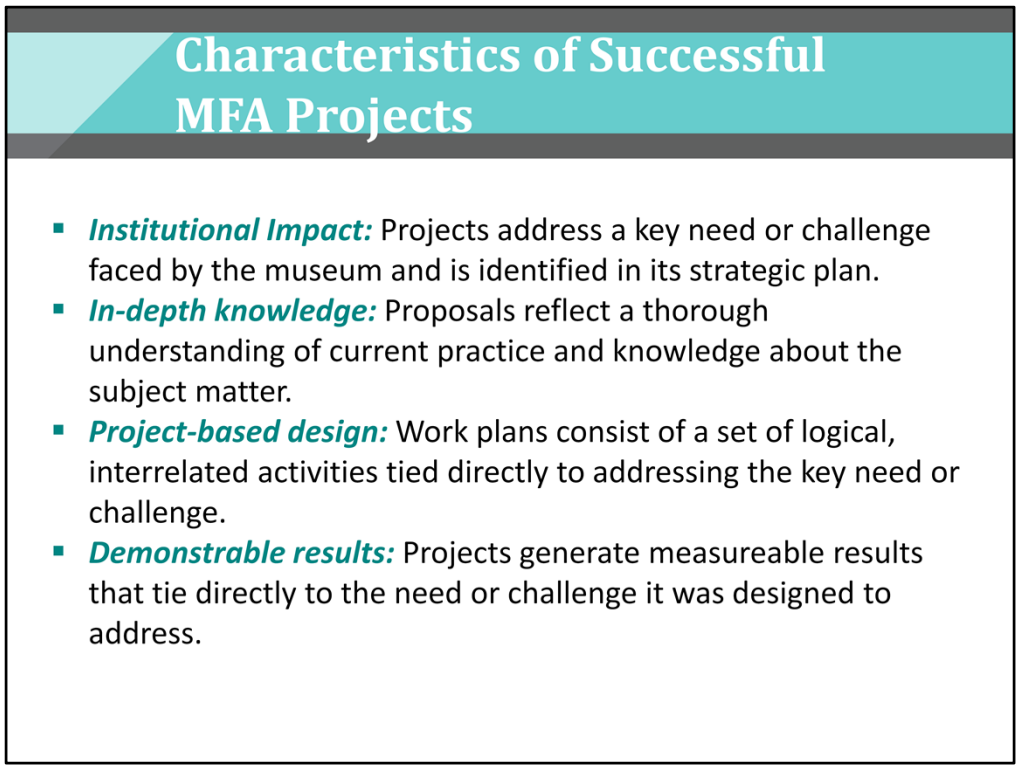
In this presentation, we'll be addressing the following topics:

- MFA Program goals
- Characteristics of Successful MFA Projects
- Important dates
- The questions of How much and how many?
- Project categories
- Allowable and Unallowable Costs
- Application Components
- Application Tips
- The Review Process
- IMLS Staff Contact Information

Let's begin with MFA's Program Goals. Museums for America is structured to support projects that strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public.

This might be through activities that reflect museums as active resources for **lifelong learning**, as important institutions in the establishment and maintenance **of livable communities**, or as **good stewards** of the nation's collections.

The key concepts here that distinguish MFA from other IMLS funding programs are that the focus is on an **individual museum, its particular community or public**, and **the collections entrusted to its care**.



With this focus on supporting the individual museum, what are the characteristics of successful Museums for America projects? There are four, and successful projects address all of them well. As you prepare your proposal, then, you should keep these characteristics in mind.

FIRST, Institutional Impact: Your project should address a key need or challenge that faces your museum and that is identified in your strategic plan.

SECOND, In-depth knowledge: Your proposal should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

THIRD, Project-based design: Your work plan should consist of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.

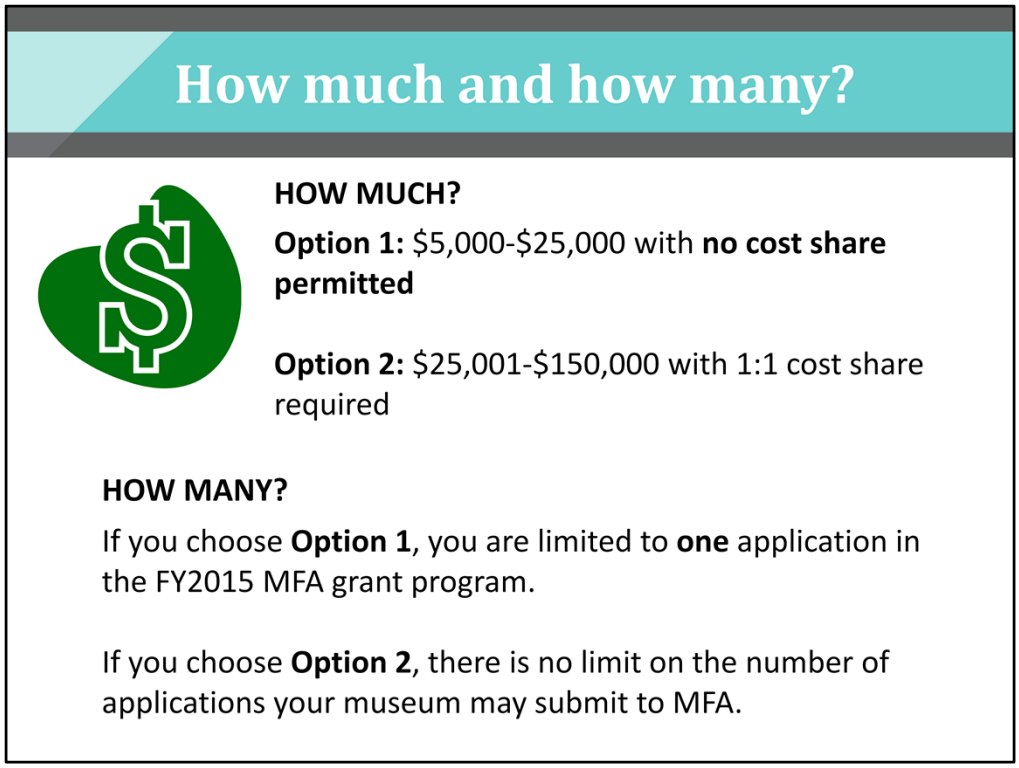
AND FOURTH, Demonstrable results: Your project should generate measureable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

It has been our experience that an unfunded application is one that has failed to deliver convincingly on one or more of these, so it is wise to think hard about how to structure your application to show how your project will be strong in each.

We want to remind you of important dates for MFA applications. They are due by 11:59 pm Eastern Time on December 1, 2014. That is non-negotiable and the time stamp is auto-generated by the Grants.gov system. We will say this over and over again, but **start early** and **submit early.** That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to solve the problem.

MFA awards will be announced in September, 2015.

And all MFA projects must be scheduled to start October 1, November 1, or December 1, 2015. The choice is yours.



Our next topic has to do with how much funding may you request and how many applications are you allowed to submit. These are important questions.

Turning first to how much money may you request. There are two options again this year. Option 1 is to apply for an amount between $5,000 and $25,000. If you elect Option 1, then you do not need to provide a cost share, and in fact, you may NOT provide a cost share. When we say no cost share is permitted, we mean that your application will be removed from consideration if you provide one. That's major, so let me say it again. If you apply for $25,000 or less, **DO NOT INCLUDE A COST SHARE IN YOUR BUDGET OR REFERENCE ONE IN YOUR PROJECT.**

Option 2 is to apply for an amount between $25,001 and the maximum $150,000. If you elect Option 2, then you must provide a 1:1 cost share. This cost share may be in the form of cash, staff or volunteer time, or third-party contributions. It may not, of course, be funds from another federal source.

The second question is how many applications may you file? If you choose Option 1 and request between $5,000 and $25,000 with no cost share, then you are limited to one application in the FY2015 MFA grant program.

If you choose Option 2 and request between $25,001 and $150,000 with a 1:1 cost share,

then there is no limit on the number of applications your museum may submit to MFA.

Our next topic is that of MFA Project Categories. Second to choosing to apply to Museums for America, this is likely to be your most important decision about your funding application.

Much like your own institution's strategic plan, ours identifies goals that help us achieve our vision and accomplish our mission. What is most important to you as a potential applicant is that there are three programmatic goals that drive our grant-making. Beginning in 2013, we have required applicants for Museums for America to align their projects with one of these goals.

Goal 1, abbreviated as "Learning Experiences," makes it clear that IMLS supports the unique ability of museums to empower people of all ages through experiential learning and discovery.

Goal 2, "Community Anchors," specifies that IMLS promotes the role of museums as essential partners in addressing the needs of their communities by leveraging their expertise, knowledge, physical space, technology, and other resources.

And Goal 3, "Collections Stewardship," confirms that IMLS supports the exemplary management, care, and conservation of museum collections.
Why is your decision about which category to choose so important? For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise

in these general categories. And for another, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same category. In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the category you've identified.

Project Categories: Learning Experiences

MFA Learning Experiences projects might include:

- Interpretive and educational program development and delivery
- Exhibition development, design, and fabrication
- Digital media development, design, and delivery
- Digitization activities designed to enhance a learning project
- Publication research, design, and printing
- Training for staff, volunteers, and educators

Successful projects provide high-quality, inclusive educational opportunities that address particular audience needs.

So let's take a look at what kinds of activities a project in each of these categories might include.

An MFA Learning Experiences project might include:

- Interpretive and educational programs
- Exhibitions
- Digital media development, design and delivery
- Publication research, design, and printing
- Training for staff, volunteers, and educators

Ideally, these and related activities will place the learner at the center and contribute to the creation of engaging learning experiences for their targeted audiences. In fact, as you plan your project in this category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of "learner at the center" and build around it. And relatedly, spend time really thinking through who your targeted audience for this project is and what their needs are. We suspect this will make putting your proposal together much easier and you'll end up with a better product.

Project Categories: Community Anchors

MFA Community Anchors projects might include:

- Forums for community dialogue
- Community-driven exhibitions and programs
- Audience development and community outreach
- Community-focused planning activities
- Audience research and evaluation
- Training for staff, volunteers, and interns in community outreach and engagement

Successful projects strive to create a better quality of life within communities.

A Community Anchors project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to the institution's functioning as an essential partner in addressing community needs.

- Forums for community dialogue
- Community-driven exhibitions and programs
- Audience development and community outreach
- Community-focused planning activities
- Audience research and evaluation
- Training for staff, volunteers, and interns in community outreach and engagement

If your project involves exhibitions/programs, how do you know if your project fits best within Learning Experiences or Community Anchors? We suggest this test: If the motivation for doing the project comes from within your institution—perhaps your vision or your mission directs you to create these things—then you might well be looking at a Learning Experiences project. If the motivation for doing the project comes from outside your institution and in your community and you "raise you hand" to say, in essence, "Our resources, our position, our skills, etc. put us in a great position to address this need. We can make a difference and be part of the overall solution," then you might have a Community Anchors project.

Ultimately, it's your choice. We encourage you to choose one and write your application that way. Hybrids don't work as well as sharply focused applications.

Project Categories: Collections Stewardship

MFA Collections Stewardship projects might include:

- Planning for collections management, care, and conservation
- Cataloguing, inventorying, documenting, and registration
- Developing and enhancing collections databases
- Digitization activities designed to improve collections management
- Conservation surveys and treatments
- Rehousing
- Environmental improvements for collections storage/exhibit areas
- Training of staff, volunteers and interns in collections management, care, and/or conservation

Successful projects contribute to the long-term preservation of materials entrusted to the museum's care.

Our third category is that of Collections Stewardship. An MFA project in Collections Stewardship might include:

- Planning for collections management, care, and conservation
- Cataloguing, inventorying, documenting, and registration
- Developing and enhancing collections databases
- Digitization activities designed to improve collections management
- Conservation surveys and treatments
- Rehousing
- Environmental improvements for collections storage/exhibit areas
- Training of staff, volunteers and interns in collections management, care, and/or conservation

Individually and in the aggregate, these activities help your museum deliver on exemplary stewardship of the collections entrusted to your care.

It's important to note that this project category welcomes the types of proposals that were previously solicited through the Conservation Project Support program. IMLS maintains its commitment to collections care, conservation, and preservation, and continues to encourage a step-by-step, progressive approach to conservation which involves assessing needs, creating a prioritized list of activities, and following through by **doing the most**

important things first.

About Digitization

You may request funding to support:

- **Digitization activities** (the scanning of printed materials, texts, still images, and audio-visual materials)
- **Creation of digital files** using a device such as a digital camera

IMPORTANT: Choose the **project category** that best matches the use to which you will put the digitized content you will create.

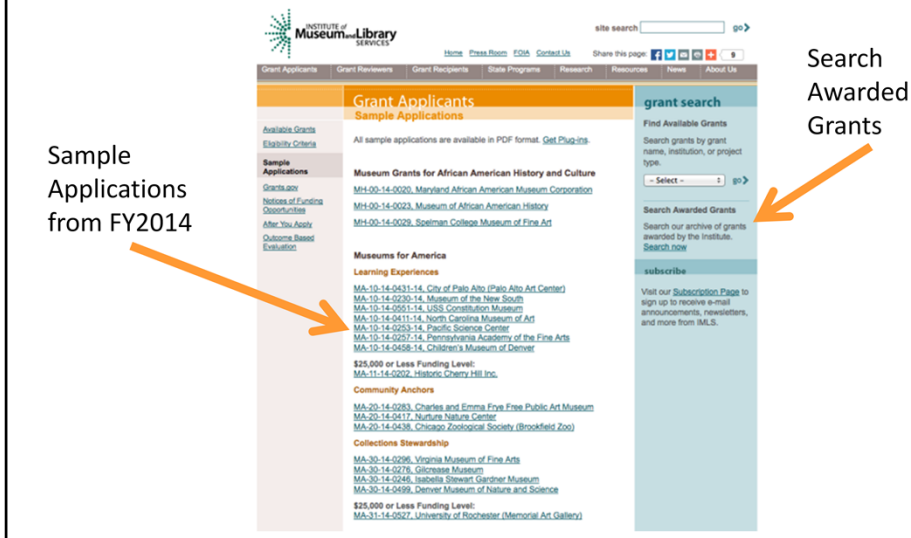
Before we close our discussion of Project Categories, we want to mention our guidance for projects that involve digitizing activities.

You may request funding to support digitization activities or the creation of digital files using a device such as a digital camera in any MFA project category. It is very important that you choose the project category that best matches the use to which you will put the digitized content you will create. In other words, think hard about the end use and not simply the activity that will get you there.

If your primary intent is to use the digitized content for learning experiences by providing access, then you should consider submitting your project in the Learning Experiences category. If your primary intent is to improve one or more aspects of collections management and care, then you should consider submitting in the Collections Stewardship category.

We recognize that this is another area in which many projects serve two purposes. Our most heartfelt advice is to choose one, study the review criteria for that category, and write your proposal accordingly.

Where to learn more…

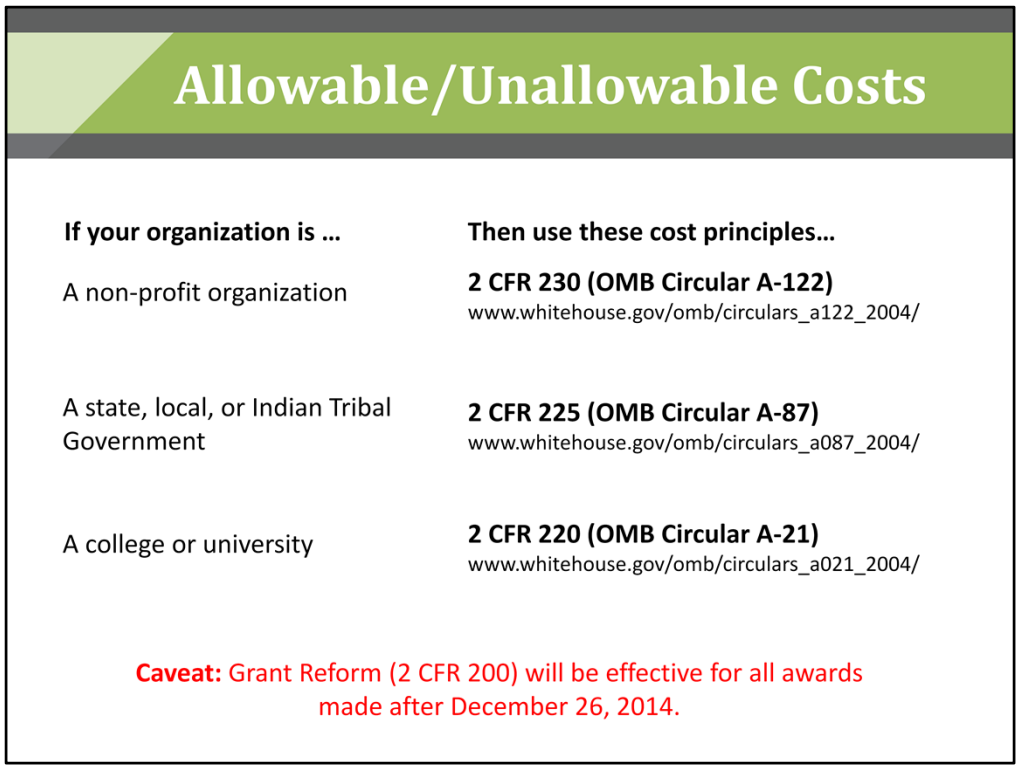


www.imls.gov/applicants/sample_applications.aspx

We want to point out two places on the IMLS website to learn more about the projects we have funded in Museums for America.

On the right hand side of nearly every page of our website is a feature called Search Awarded Grants. This is an opportunity to search our archive of grants that we have awarded in past years by grant name, grant issue area, state, year, institution name, and keyword. Your search will return the grantee's name, city, state, year, amount, grant name, and a brief description of the project.

We have also posted the abstract, narrative, and schedule of completion of 16 successful MFA applications from 2014, with representatives of each project category. If you are conflicted over which project category to choose, looking at these exemplary proposals might help clarify your thinking. These may be found at www.imls.gov/applicants/sample_applications.aspx.



We'll turn now to allowable and unallowable costs for your project. You want to be very careful in preparing your proposal and include only allowable costs in both your IMLS ask and your cost share, if one is required.

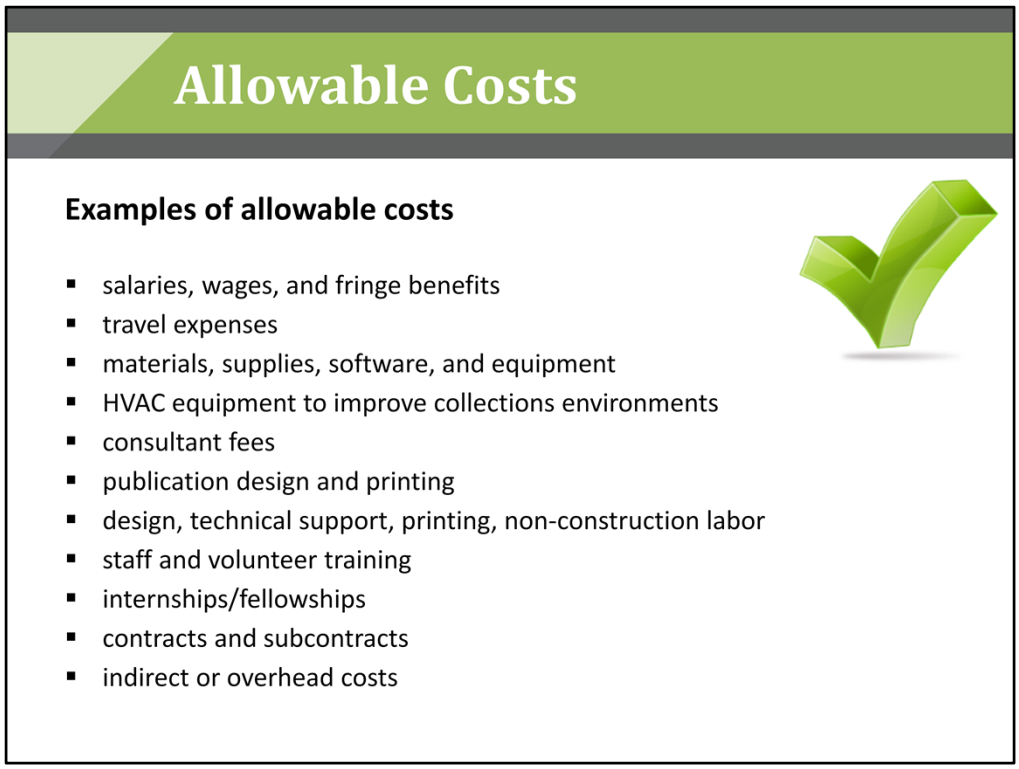
What is allowable to include in your project reflects what kind of institution you are. This chart is in the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, but we repeat it here because it is so important. If your museum is a non-profit organization, then you should refer to 2CFR 230 or OMB Circular A-122.

If you are a state, local, or Indian tribal government, then you should refer to 2 CFR 225 or OMB Circular A-87.

And if you are a college or university, you should refer to 2 CFR 220 or OMB Circular A-21.

Caveat: Within the past year, the Office of Management and Budget has issued final guidance on Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards—or for short, Grant Reform (2 CFR 200), and this will be effective for all awards made after December 26, 2014. That includes the grants for which you will be applying this round. And this means you will be required to follow those regulations that will be in place at the time of the award.

So in essence you need to use one set of guidance for preparing your proposal and being prepared to follow a different one should you receive an award. We will be doing this with you, however, so at this point it should just be something of which you and your grant offices are aware.



In the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs. These include:

- salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- travel expenses
- materials, supplies, software, and equipment
- HVAC equipment to improve collections environments
- consultant fees
- publication design and printing
- design, technical support, printing, non-construction labor
- staff and volunteer training
- internships/fellowships
- contracts and subcontracts
- indirect or overhead costs

So, these costs may be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for and what you will pay for as part of your cost share, if one is required.

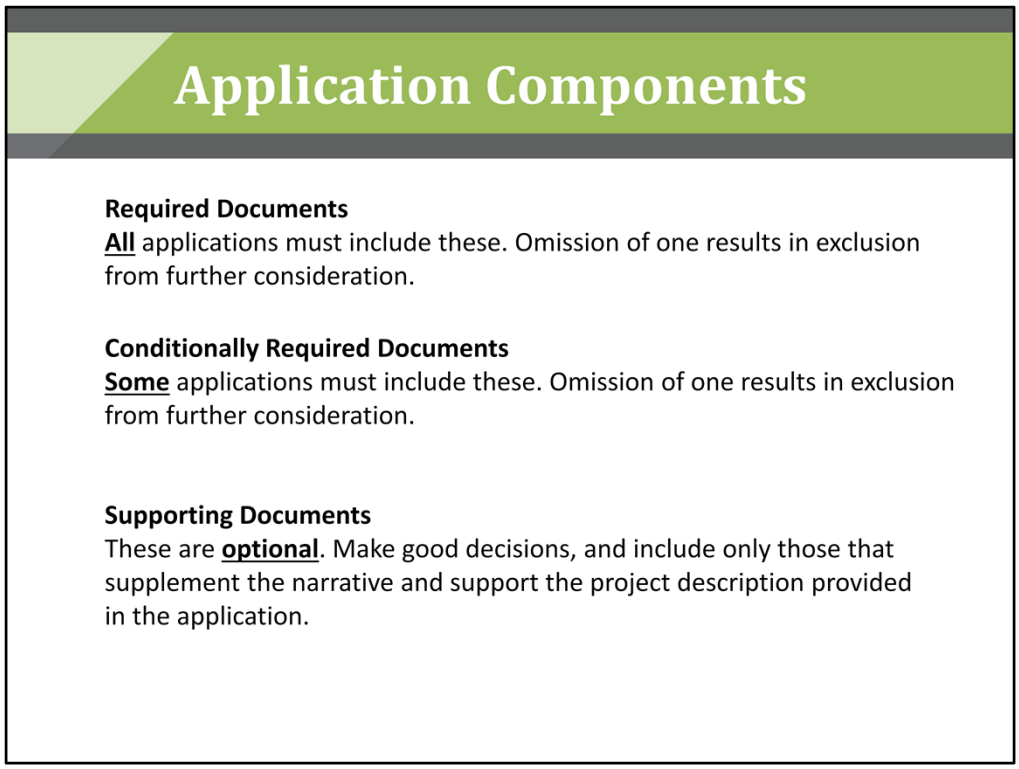
We also provide a partial list of the most common examples of unallowable costs. These include:

- general museum fundraising costs, such as development office staff or other staff time devoted to general fundraising
- contributions to endowments
- general museum operating support
- acquisition of collections
- general advertising or public relations costs designed solely to promote activities other than those related to the specific project
- construction and renovation of museum facilities
- exhibit fabrication that involves contract labor of the construction trades
- reconstruction or renovation of historic sites
- social activities, ceremonies, receptions, or entertainment
- pre-award costs

So, these costs may NOT be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for nor part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share, if one is required.

As you prepare your application it's a good idea to compare your list of proposed expenses against these lists of allowable and unallowable costs and against the appropriate set of cost principles. If after that you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be

happy to help.



Next up are application components.

Application components fall into three categories in Museums for America. The first is that of Required Documents. All applications must include these. Omission of even just one results in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

The second group is that of Conditionally Required Documents. Some applications must include these. It might depend on the nature of your institution or some aspect of your project. In either case, omission of even just one results in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

The third group of application components are Supporting Documents. These are completely optional. You may submit some or none. We strongly recommend, however, that you make good decisions here and include only those that supplement the narrative and support the project description you provide in your application. This is not the place to introduce new information. We also recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers' time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material that is not directly relevant to your project. Being judicious actually works to your benefit. Include what is important and helpful and stop there.

Table of Application Components

Use the table to keep organized.

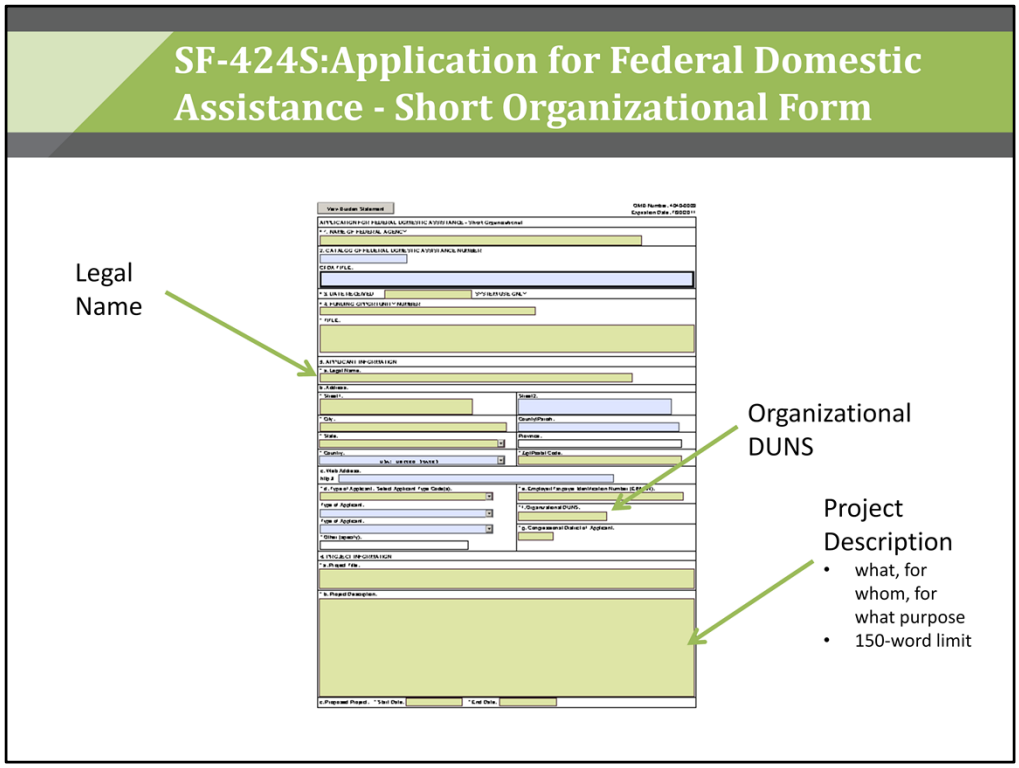
- Serves as a checklist of application components
- Identifies document formats and naming conventions
- Provides links to instructions and forms
- Identifies categories of documents (Required, Conditionally Required, Supporting)

Table of Application Components

Component	Format	File name to use
Required Documents		
The Application for Federal Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-4245)	Grants.gov form	n/a
Abstract (one page, max.)	PDF document	Abstract.pdf
IMLS Program Information Sheet	IMLS PDF form	Programinfo.pdf
Organizational Profile (one page, max.)	PDF document	Organizationalprofile.pdf
Strategic Plan Summary (two pages, max.)	PDF document	Strategicplan.pdf
Narrative (seven pages, max.)	PDF document	Narrative.pdf
Schedule of Completion (one page per year, max.)	PDF document	Scheduleofcompletion.pdf
IMLS Budget Form	IMLS PDF form	Budget.pdf
Budget Justification	PDF document	Budgetjustification.pdf
List of Key Project Staff and Consultants (one page, max.)	PDF document	Projectstaff.pdf
Resumes of Key Project Staff and Consultants that appear on the list above (two pages each, max.)	PDF document	Resumes.pdf
Conditionally Required Documents		
Proof of Nonprofit Status	PDF document	Proofnonprofit.pdf
Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement	PDF document	Indirectcostrate.pdf
Supporting Documents		
Information that supplements the narrative and supports the project description provided in the application	PDF document	Supportingdoc1.pdf Supportingdoc2.pdf Supportingdoc3.pdf etc.
Digital Stewardship Supplementary Information Form	IMLS PDF form	Digitalstewardship.pdf

In the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity is a Table of Application Components. We recommend that you use this to keep yourself organized. It serves as a checklist of application components. It tells you what formats and naming conventions to use for each document so that you may upload your application to Grants.gov successfully.

It provides links to instructions and forms. And it tells you which documents are required, conditionally required, and supporting.



Now we're going to look at some of the forms that are required for your application, and we'll focus on those areas that seem to be the most challenging for applicants.

The first form we'll consider is the SF 424S, or the Application for Federal Domestic Assistance, Short Organizational Form. This is a Required Document, and the form is downloaded as part of the Grants.gov package. It is not available from the IMLS website.

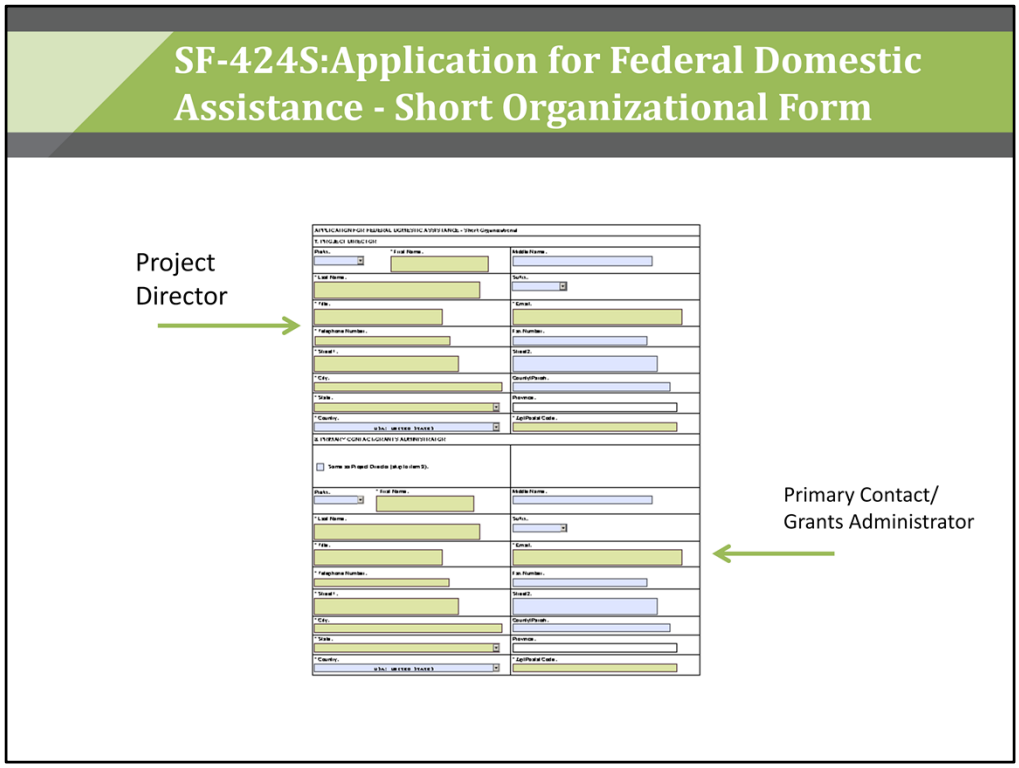
There are three important things to watch for on this page:

The **Legal Name** ties to Program Information Sheet, which we'll get to in a few minutes, and these should match. It is the name to which your DUNS number is officially tied.

The **Organizational DUNS number** is important in confirming your eligibility, identity, and tax-exempt status. It must link to the Legal Name.

And at the bottom of the page is space for a **Project Description.** This is important for at least two reasons: **(1)** We use this for several purposes during the review process, and if you're funded, it can be the basis for the representation of your project that goes on our website and to the media. Write your project description to address **what you plan to do**, **for whom**, and for **what purpose**. You might consider making this the last piece you write so that it is as concise and accurate as possible. **(2)** There is a character limit that you won't

encounter until the moment you press the **SUBMIT** button. Your entire application might be rejected by Grants.gov if you exceed the limit. You'll get an immediate message to that effect, but if you're minutes away from the deadline, you might not have time to rewrite it. Our experience is that 150 words is close to the maximum limit.

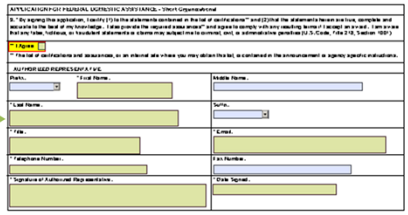


Page 2 of the SF-424S is about the Project Director and the Primary Contact/Grants Administrator. The Project Director should be the person who is responsible for the day-to-day activities of the project—in short for making sure the project gets done. The Primary Contact might be someone in the grants office or someone whose role is more purely administrative. Important to remember here is that in many cases these two positions may be the same person. They don't have to be, but they **may** be.

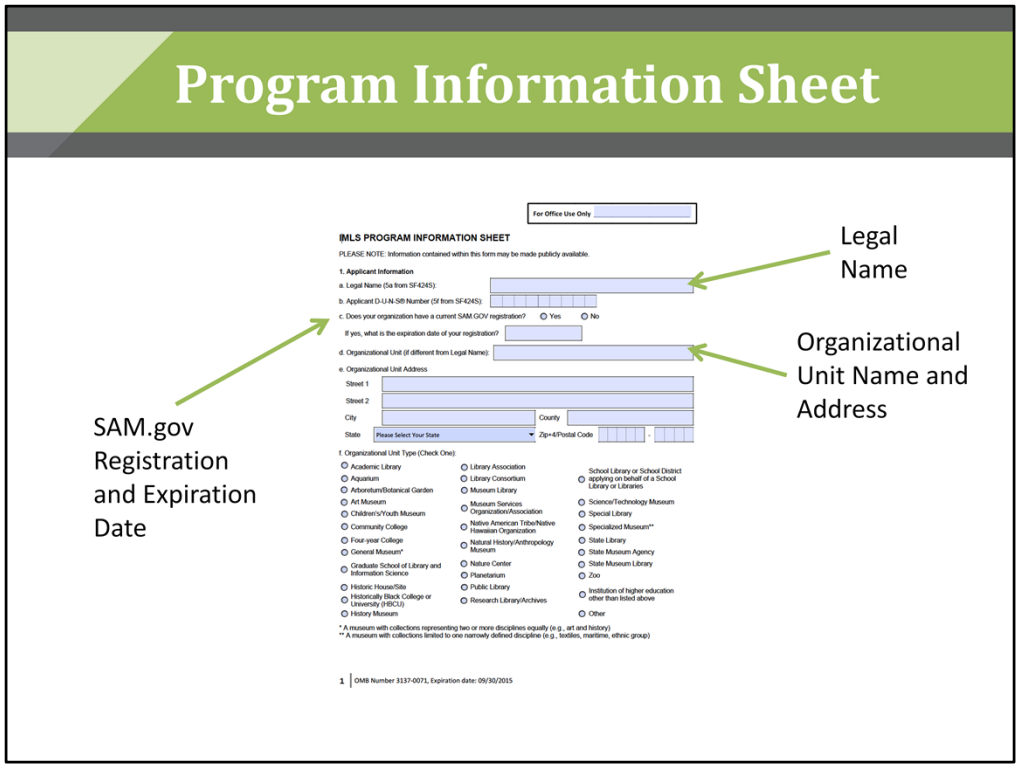
HOWEVER…

SF-424S:Application for Federal Domestic Assistance - Short Organizational Form

Authorizing Official/Authorized Representative



The Authorizing Official, also known as the Authorized Representative, MUST be different from the Project Director. This is the person who has the authority and the responsibility for certifying that statements made in the application are true, complete, and accurate and that the organization will comply with all necessary certifications, assurances, and terms if an award is made. This might be the President/CEO, Director, Board President, or other position of authority within the institution. **It cannot be the Project Director, however.**



Let's turn now to the Program Information Sheet, which is an IMLS form downloadable from our website. This is a five-page document that is VERY important to your application. The Notice of Funding Opportunity provides complete instructions for how to fill out this form, but we want to highlight a couple of especially important things for you here. **MAKE SURE THE PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET YOU DOWNLOAD LOOKS LIKE THIS ONE.** We made a few changes made this year, and you want to be sure you aren't using a cached version.

In #1a on page 1, you'll see "Legal Name." This must be the same as the "Legal Name" you provided on the SF-424S, and again, it must link to the DUNS number for your organization.

Below that in #1c, we ask about your SAM.gov registration. You MUST have a SAM.gov registration, and it MUST be active. We recommend that you check this immediately. If you haven't registered yet, start the process now because it can take several weeks. If you need to renew, start that process now too because it also can take several weeks. Please remember: Your SAM.gov registration must be active throughout the grant review period, at the time awards are made, and throughout the lifespan of your grant. Without it, we cannot accept your application, review it, make an award, or provide you money.

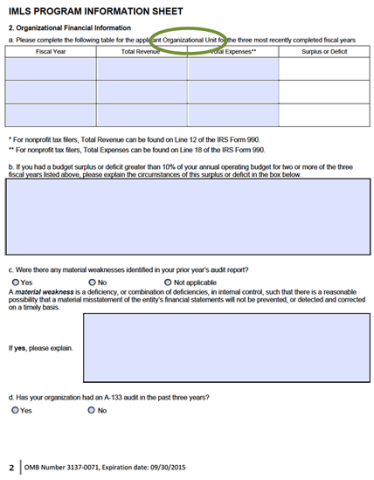
In #1d, we ask you to record your organizational unit if that is different from the Legal

Name of the applicant. When might that be the case? In order to be eligible for an MFA award, you must qualify as a museum. In our Notice of Funding Opportunity and in our pre-recorded webinar, we outline exactly what that means. In some cases, the Legal Name entity might be something other than a museum—such as a university. On its own, it would not be eligible to apply for an MFA grant. However, that entity might administer an organizational unit that DOES qualify. In our example of a university, a campus art museum or a natural history museum run by the university might meet the eligibility requirements and the pairing could therefore apply for funding.

If you have questions about your own situation, spend some time with the eligibility requirements for Museums for America, and then call us if you need help in interpreting them.

Program Information Sheet

Financial Information



IMLS PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET

2. Organizational Financial Information

a. Please complete the following table for the applicant Organizational Unit for the three most recently completed fiscal years

Fiscal Year	Total Revenue*	Total Expenses**	Surplus or Deficit

* For nonprofit tax filers, Total Revenue can be found on Line 12 of the IRS Form 990.
** For nonprofit tax filers, Total Expenses can be found on Line 18 of the IRS Form 990.

b. If you had a budget surplus or deficit greater than 10% of your annual operating budget for two or more of the three fiscal years listed above, please explain the circumstances of this surplus or deficit in the box below.

c. Were there any material weaknesses identified in your prior year's audit report?

Yes No Not applicable

A **material weakness** is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statements will not be prevented, or detected and corrected on a timely basis.

If **yes**, please explain.

d. Has your organization had an A-133 audit in the past three years?

Yes No

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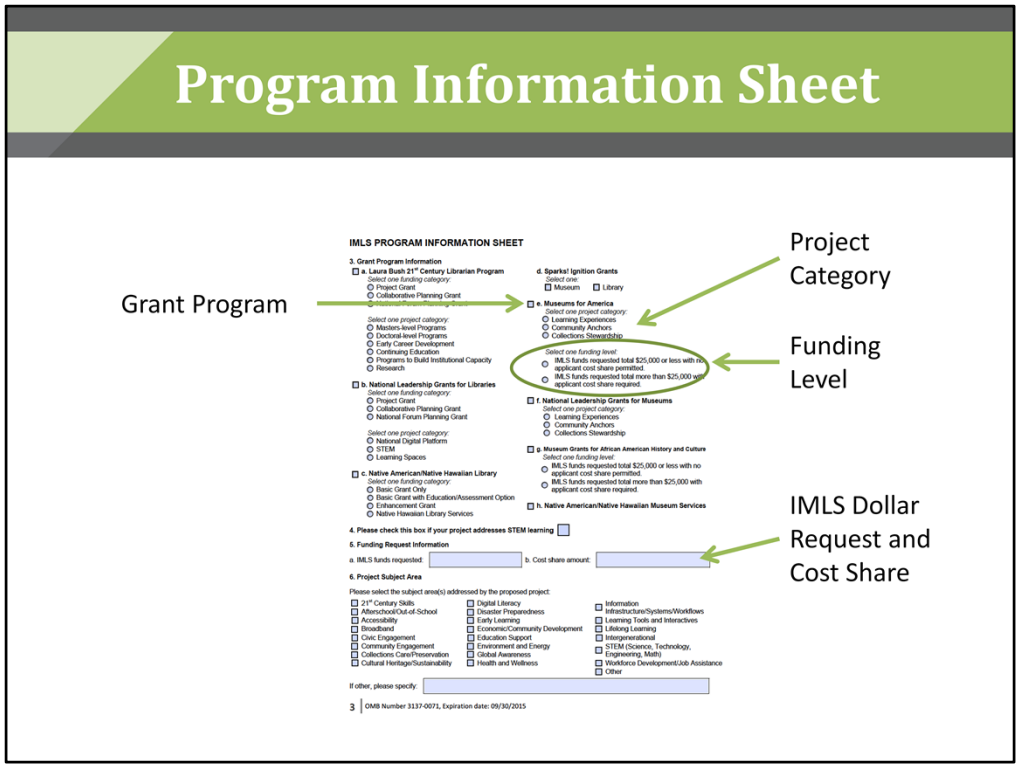
On page 2, we ask questions about your organization's finances—total revenue and expenses for three fiscal years; budget surplus or deficit greater than 10% of your annual operating budget; and any material weakness identified in your prior year's audit report. If you are applying using an **organizational unit** designation, then these questions apply to it, rather than to the Legal Name entity.



On page 3, we ask you to select a grant program, which will be Museums for America; a project category; and an MFA funding level.

#3e is where you indicate Museums for America and then identify the project category—Learning Experiences, Community Anchors, or Collections Stewardship—you have selected for your application. Important to know here is that the selection you make here determines the group in which your proposal will be reviewed. We won't second-guess you on this, so you should choose wisely.

Below that is the opportunity to select a funding level. As we discussed earlier, Option 1 is $5,000 to $25,000 with no cost share **permitted**. Option 2 is $25,001 to $150,000 with a 1:1 cost share requirement.

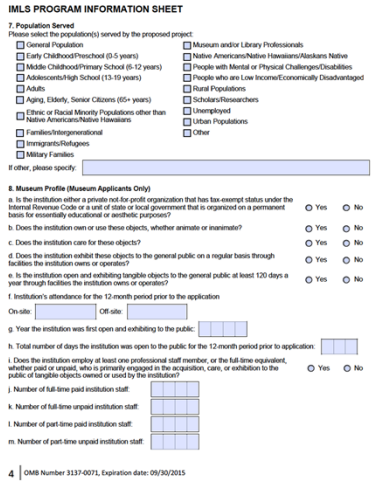
VERY IMPORTANT: The phrase "no applicant cost share permitted" means that if you provide one, we will be forced to eliminate your application from consideration. This funding option is truly meant for projects whose entirety is $25,000 or less. It is NOT for $25,000 contribution to a larger effort. If you provide a cost share, then we have to conclude that your project is more than $25,000 and thus not appropriate. It's worth saying one more time: If you apply for the $5,000-$25,000 funding level, **DO NOT INCLUDE A COST SHARE.**

REMEMBER: If you choose Option 1, you are limited to one application in the FY2015 MFA grant program. If you choose Option 2, there is no limit on the number of applications your museum may submit to MFA.

In #5a, we ask you to tell us how many dollars you are requesting from IMLS, and in #5b, we ask you to record your cost share. **Make sure these amounts reflect what's in your budget.** Sometimes people skip these blocks because they intend to fill them in later but forget, and or they record preliminary numbers that change by the time they finish your application. Please double check them.

Program Information Sheet

Museum Profile



IMLS PROGRAM INFORMATION SHEET

7. Population Served

Please select the population(s) served by the proposed project:

- ☐ General Population
- ☐ Early Childhood/Preschool (0-5 years)
- ☐ Middle Childhood/Primary School (6-12 years)
- ☐ Adolescents/High School (13-19 years)
- ☐ Adults
- ☐ Aging, Elderly, Senior Citizens (65+ years)
- ☐ Ethnic or Racial Minority Populations other than Native Americans/Native Hawaiians
- ☐ Families/Intergenerational
- ☐ Immigrants/Refugees
- ☐ Military Families
- ☐ Museum and/or Library Professionals
- ☐ Native Americans/Native Hawaiians/Alaskans Native
- ☐ People with Mental or Physical Challenges/Disabilities
- ☐ People who are Low Income/Economically Disadvantaged
- ☐ Rural Populations
- ☐ Scholars/Researchers
- ☐ Unemployed
- ☐ Urban Populations
- ☐ Other

If other, please specify:

8. Museum Profile (Museum Applicants Only)

a. Is the institution either a private not-for-profit organization that has tax-exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code or a unit of state or local government that is organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes? ○ Yes ○ No

b. Does the institution own or use these objects, whether animate or inanimate? ○ Yes ○ No

c. Does the institution care for these objects? ○ Yes ○ No

d. Does the institution exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities the institution owns or operates? ○ Yes ○ No

e. Is the institution open and exhibiting tangible objects to the general public at least 120 days a year through facilities the institution owns or operates? ○ Yes ○ No

f. Institution's attendance for the 12-month period prior to the application

On-site: Off-site:

g. Year the institution was first open and exhibiting to the public:

h. Total number of days the institution was open to the public for the 12-month period prior to application:

i. Does the institution employ at least one professional staff member, or the full-time equivalent, whether paid or unpaid, who is primarily engaged in the acquisition, care, or exhibition to the public of tangible objects owned or used by the institution? ○ Yes ○ No

j. Number of full-time paid institution staff:

k. Number of full-time unpaid institution staff:

l. Number of part-time paid institution staff:

m. Number of part-time unpaid institution staff:

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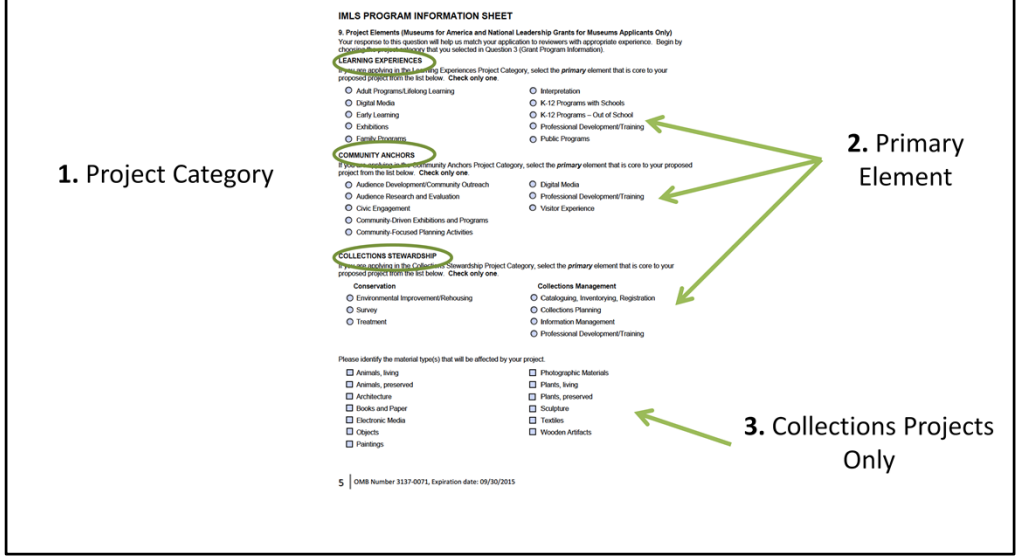
On page 4, we draw your attention to #8, Museum Profile. This is for Museum Applicants Only, and of course this applies to you if you're applying to Museums for America. This is where you provide the information we need to verify your **eligibility**. We need answers for each question, **a** through **m**, so don't skip any. To do so could result in your institution's being found ineligible.

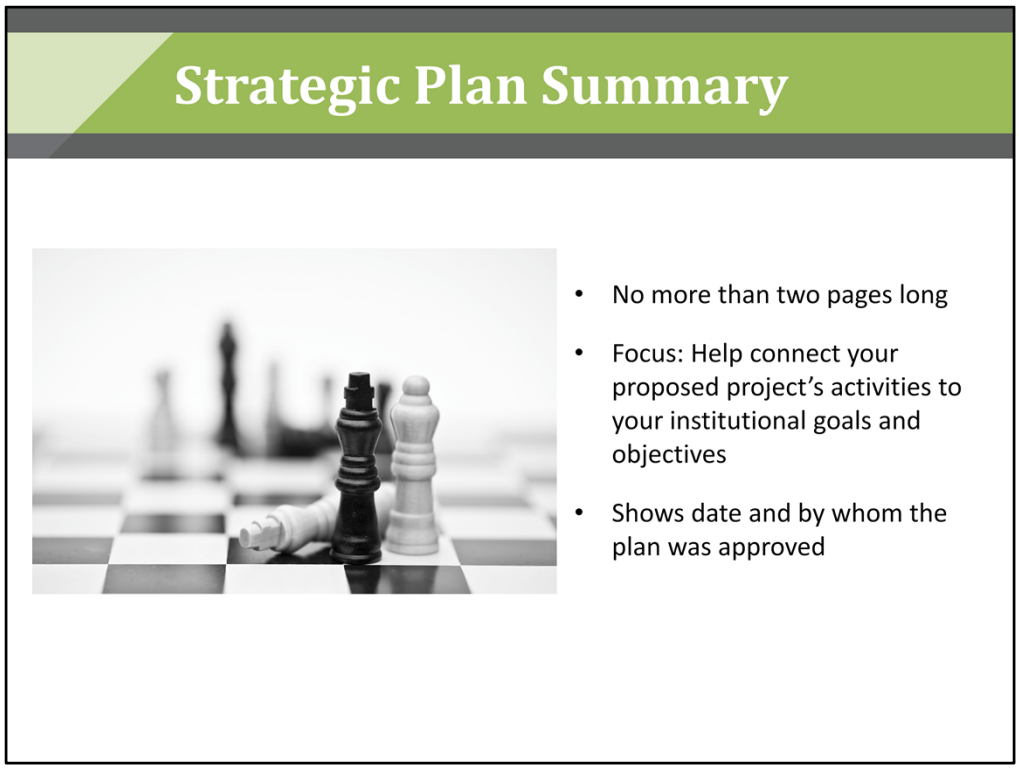
Program Information Sheet



On page 5, #9 is all about helping us identify the expertise and experience needed to review your project.

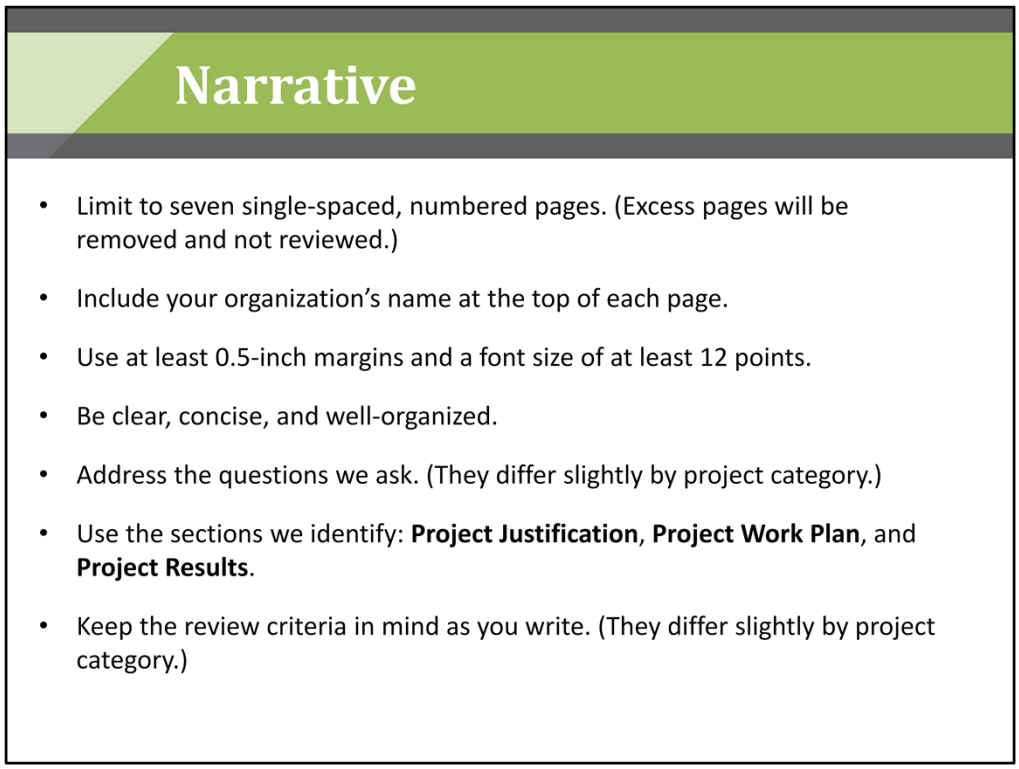
Begin by finding the project category that you selected in Question 3—Learning Experiences, Community Anchors, or Collections Stewardship. Once you've located that list of primary elements for that project category, select the ONE that you consider core to your proposed project. **To recap, you'll check one and only one primary element for your proposal.**

In addition, if your project involves collections, then we ask you to identify the material type or types that will be affected by your project. You may select as many as you feel appropriate here.



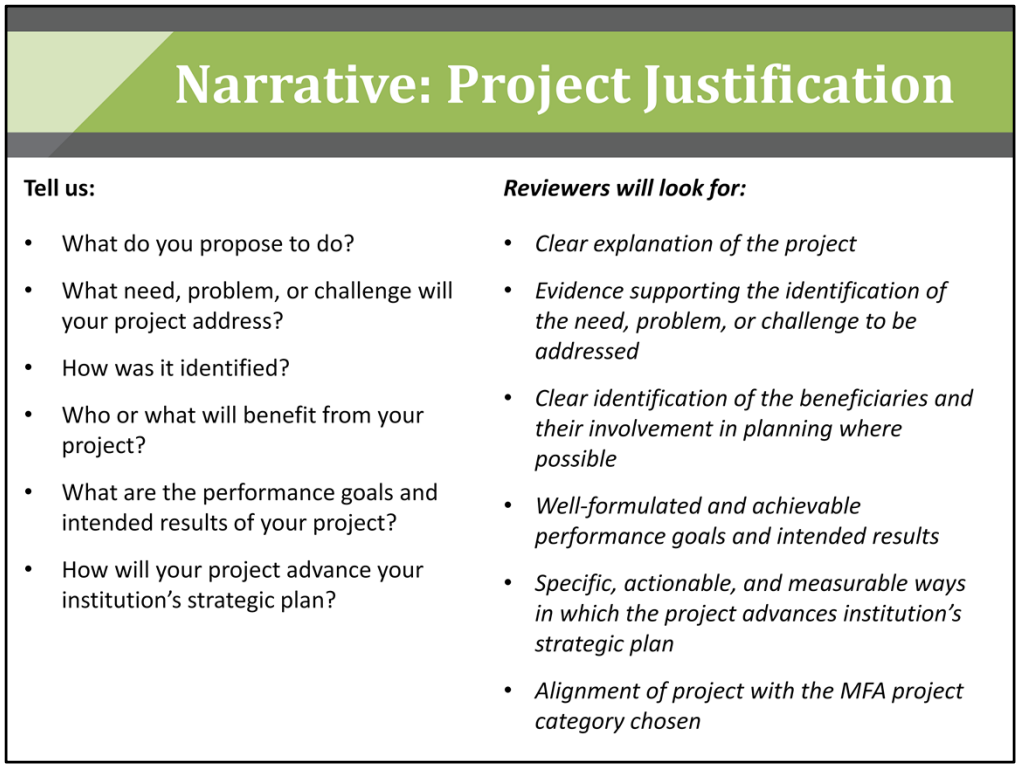
Now that we've covered some of the forms required for an MFA application, we want to turn to three specific documents that you will need to prepare. Please be aware that these are not ALL the documents you will need to submit, but they are very important ones and our experience is that applicants have the most questions about these.

First is a **strategic plan summary**. As you read the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, you will see frequent references to your organization's strategic plan or strategic goals. IMLS wants to help you achieve your goals, and indeed, one of the characteristics of a successful MFA project is that it addresses a key need or challenge that faces your museum and is identified in your strategic plan. We ask for a summary of your plan—no more than two pages—so that reviewers will be able to understand how your proposed project's activities will further your institutional goals and objectives. To verify its legitimacy, we ask that you indicate when and by whom the plan was approved. For some institutions this might be the Board of Trustees. For others it might be someone or a group representing the authority for a division or a department.



Let's turn now to the narrative, which could be considered the core of your application. Some basic considerations are these:

- Limit it to seven single-spaced, numbered pages. Be sure to test the length by printing it out in PDF format. Sometimes PDFs accommodate fewer lines per page than your word processor. **We must remove any extra pages and they will not be reviewed as part of your application.**
- Include your organization's name at the top of each page.
- Use at least 0.5-inch margins and a font size of at least 12 points.
- Be clear, concise, and well-organized in your writing.
- Address the questions we ask. The specific questions vary slightly by project category.
- Use the sections we identify—Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results
- Keep the Review Criteria in mind as you write. They too vary slightly by project category.



PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

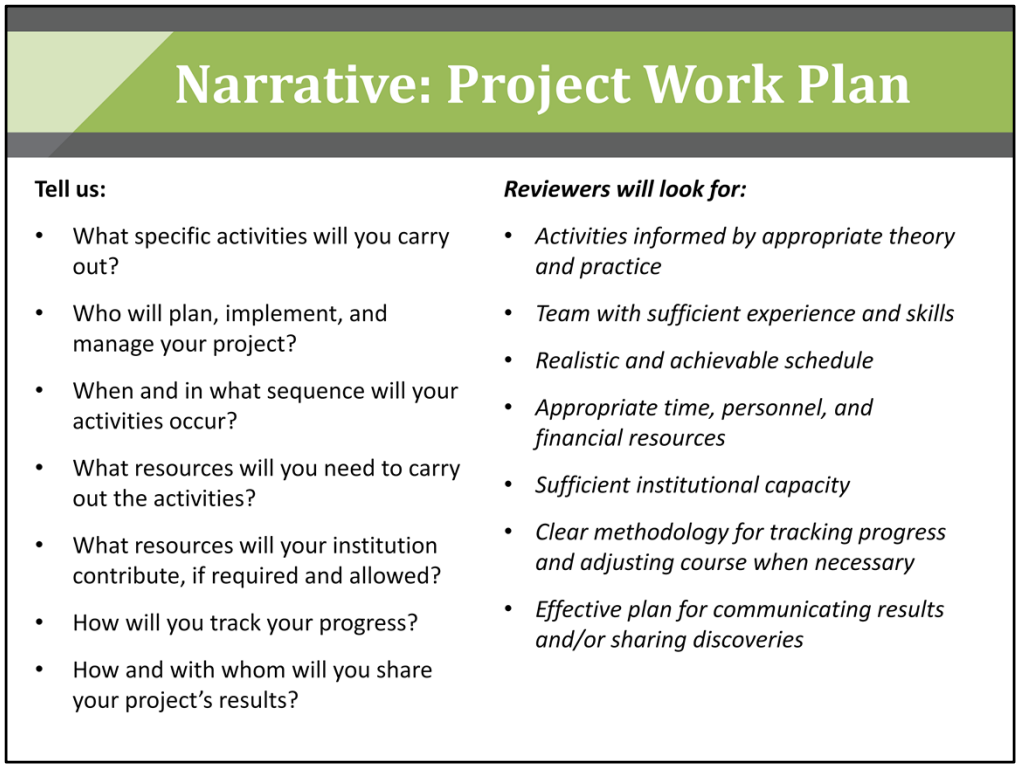
In this section of the narrative, you should lay out the reasoning for your project. Tell us in the clearest terms possible what you propose to do; what need, problem, or challenge you expect to address; who or what will benefit; what your performance goals and intended results will be; and how your project will advance your institution's strategic plan.

Remember that core to the Museums for America program is the desire to support projects that strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public and that your strategic plan is the foundation for MFA project proposals. Show the reviewers how this all fits together.

Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well you explain your project; how well you've identified the need, problem, or challenge you will address and how well you've supported that with relevant evidence; whether you've clearly identified who or what will benefit from the project, and if this involves an audience of some kind, whether they've been appropriately involved in the planning; how good a job you've done on formulating achievable performance goals and intended results; whether your project will advance your institution's strategic plan in ways that are specific, actionable, and measurable; and how well your project aligns with the MFA project category you have chosen.

If you are applying in the Collections Stewardship category, be sure to document the project's high priority status and describe and quantify the collections and/or records that

will be the focus of your project.



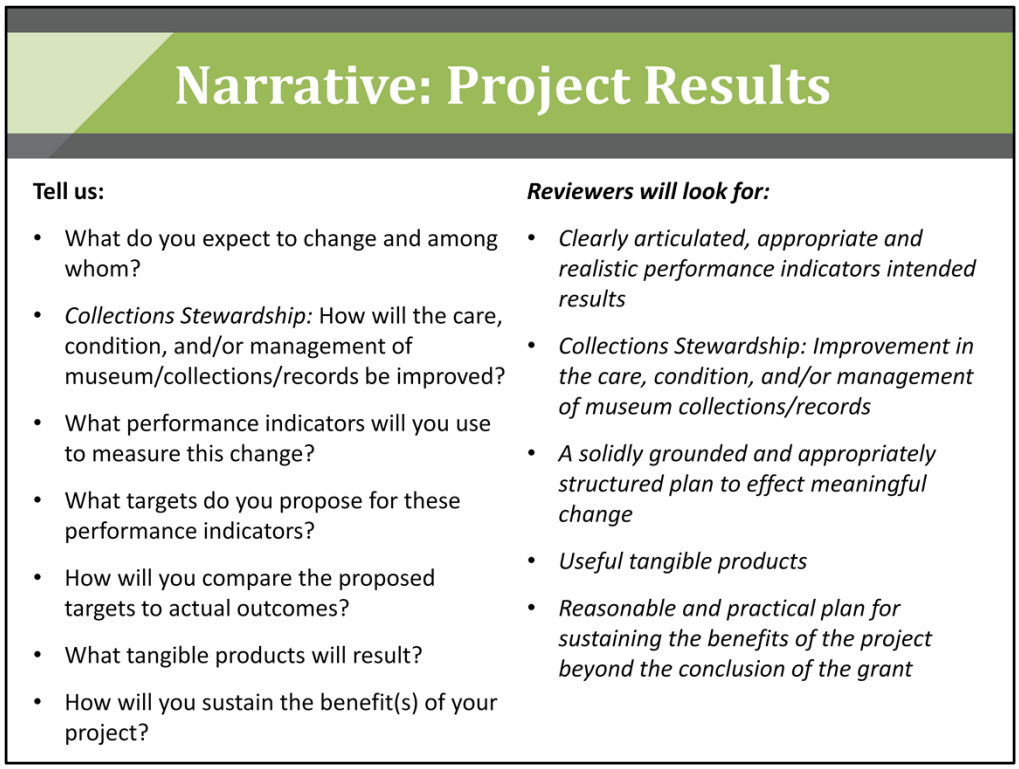
PROJECT WORK PLAN

The Project Work Plan is the part of the narrative in which you relay who will do what when and using what resources?

We ask you to tell us what specific activities you will undertake; who will plan, implement, and manage your project; when and in what sequence your activities will occur; what financial, personnel, and other resources you will need to carry out the activities; what resources your institution will contribute if this is allowed and required; how you will track progress toward achieving your performance goals and intended results; and how and with whom you will share your project's results.

Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well your activities are informed by appropriate theory and practice; whether the team you've put together has the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully; and whether your schedule of work is realistic and achievable. They'll also be looking at whether the time, personnel, and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project; whether you've got the right level of cost-sharing identified and whether they think you can provide it. They will look at your proposed evaluation methodology for tracking your activities and will weigh in on whether it will result in valid and reliable findings; and whether you've described a clear methodology for tracking your progress and adjusting course when necessary. And last but not least, is your plan for communicating results

and/or sharing discoveries appropriate and likely to be effective?



PROJECT RESULTS

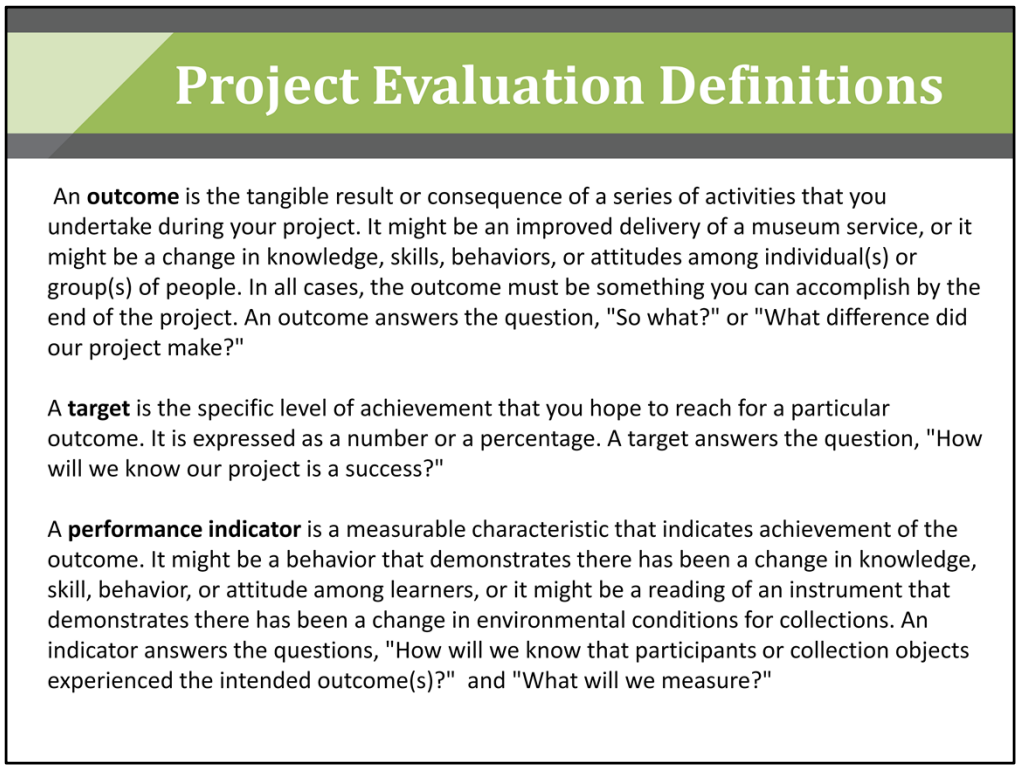
The third and last section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating what changes as the result of your doing this project. It should tie back directly to the need, problem, or challenge you set out in the Project Justification. As you might expect, then, these questions differ more from project category to project category than do those for the other sections of the narrative. It is very important therefore to address the points listed for the project category in which you are applying.

We ask you to tell us what you expect to change and among whom. For Learning Experiences and Community Anchors projects, this is likely to be a change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of your intended audience. For Collections Stewardship projects, this will most likely be a change in the care, condition and/or management of the objects or records.

We also ask you to tell us what performance indicators you will use to measure this change and what you are proposing as targets for these performance indicators. You'll need to tell us how you will compare the proposed targets to the actual outcomes you achieve. We want to know what tangible products will result form your project, and how you will sustain the benefits of your project beyond the lifespan of this particular project.

Reviewers will evaluate this section of your proposal on how well you articulate your performance indicators and intended results; the quality and appropriateness of your plan

to effect meaningful change; the usefulness of your tangible products; and how reasonable and practical your plan is for sustaining the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion for the grant.

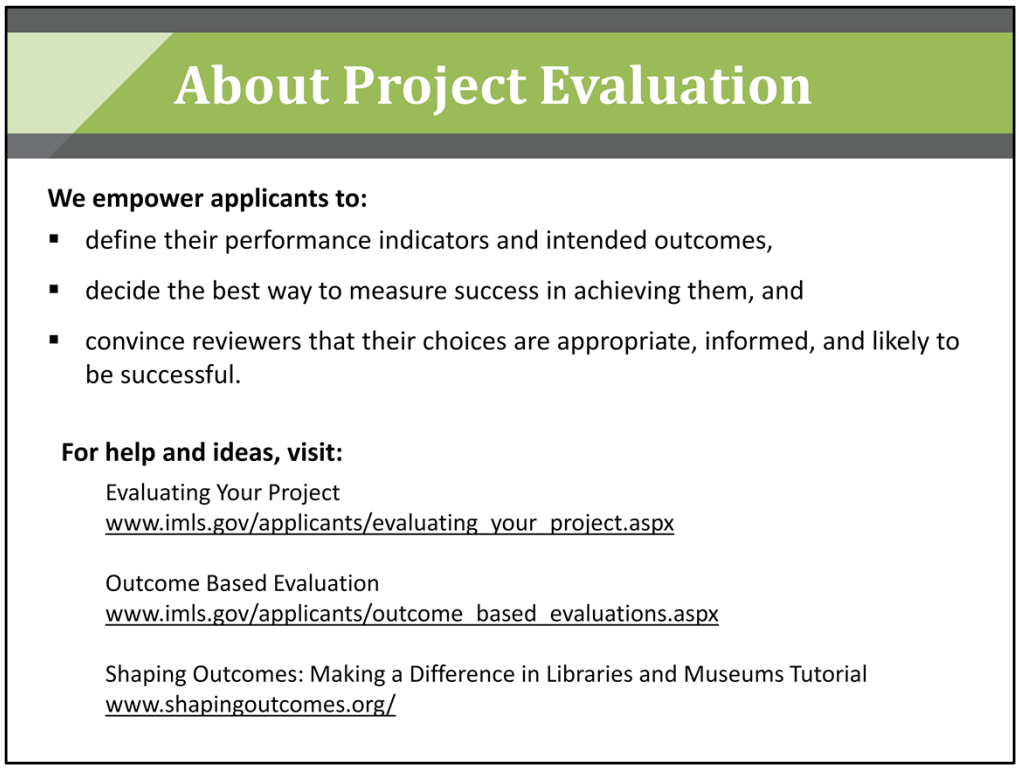


Here are some basic definitions of terms used in the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity instructions for writing your narrative.

An **outcome** is the tangible result or consequence of a series of activities that you undertake during your project. It might be an improved delivery of a museum service, or it might be a change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, or attitudes among individual(s) or group(s) of people. **In all cases, the outcome must be something you can accomplish by the end of the project.** We therefore do not recommend identifying an outcome that cannot reasonably be achieved and documented within the timeline of your project. An outcome answers the question, "So what?" or "What difference did our project make?"

A **target** is the specific level of achievement that you hope to reach for a particular outcome. It is expressed as a number or a percentage. A target answers the question, "How will we know our project is a success?"

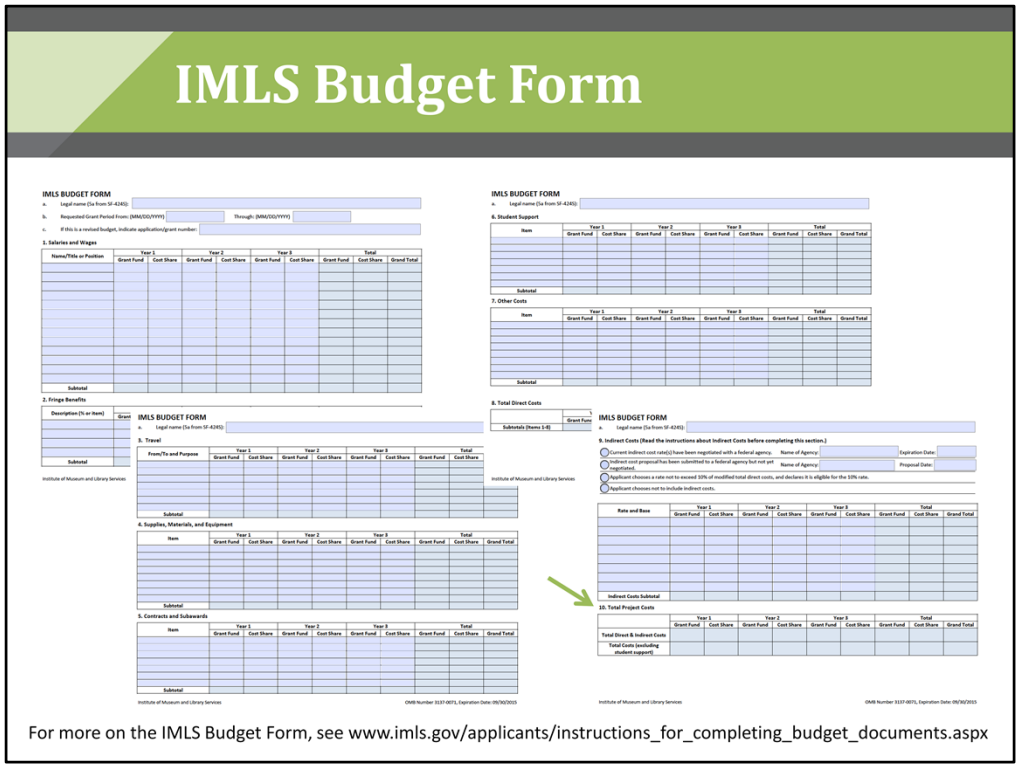
A **performance indicator** is a measurable characteristic that indicates achievement of the outcome. It might be a behavior that demonstrates there has been a change in knowledge, skill, behavior, or attitude among learners, or it might be a reading of an instrument that demonstrates there has been a change in environmental conditions for collections. An indicator answers the questions, "How will we know that participants or collection objects experienced the intended outcome(s)?" and "What will we measure?"



In talking with potential applicants about their proposals, we often hear questions about what IMLS expects in terms of evaluation and measures of success. Our current approach is to empower applicants to define their intended outcomes, decide the best way to measure success in achieving them, and then of course convince reviewers that their choice is appropriate, informed, and likely to be successful. For now, we are not prescriptive about it, but rather depend on you to make and defend your case.

For help and ideas, you might wish to visit one or all three of these webpages as you think through what is appropriate for your project:

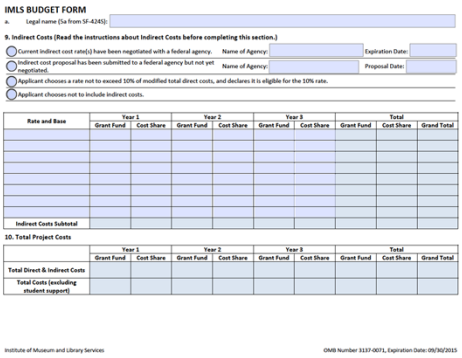
- Evaluating Your Project
- Outcome Based Evaluation, and
- Shaping Outcomes: Making a Difference in Libraries and Museums, which is a self-guided tutorial



At this point, we move on to the IMLS Budget Form. This is a single fillable PDF document that is four pages long and that you download from our website. You'll use it whether your project is 1, 2, or 3 years in duration. The form adds for you automatically, although there are still some calculations you'll need to do on your own to get the numbers you need to plug into the form. We urge you to check your figures very carefully, making sure that expenses that will be paid from IMLS funds as well as those that you will cover as part of your cost share are in the right categories, are justifiable in the context of your project, and, of course, represent allowable costs.

It's very important to make sure you have **this** version of the form, and not a cached one, as there are some important changes over previous years. The easiest way to make sure you've got the new form is to download it directly from our website and to make sure it has TEN numbered items, not ELEVEN.

Indirect Costs



IMLS BUDGET FORM

a. Legal name (5a from SF-424):

9. Indirect Costs (Read the instructions about Indirect Costs before completing this section.)

Current indirect cost rate(s) have been negotiated with a federal agency. Name of Agency: Expiration Date:

Indirect cost proposal has been submitted to a federal agency but not yet negotiated. Name of Agency: Proposal Date:

Applicant chooses a rate not to exceed 10% of modified total direct costs, and declares it is eligible for the 10% rate.

Applicant chooses not to include indirect costs.

Rate and Base	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Total		
	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grand Total
Indirect Costs Subtotal									

10. Total Project Costs

	Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Total		
	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grant Fund	Cost Share	Grand Total
Total Direct & Indirect Costs									
Total Costs (excluding student support)									

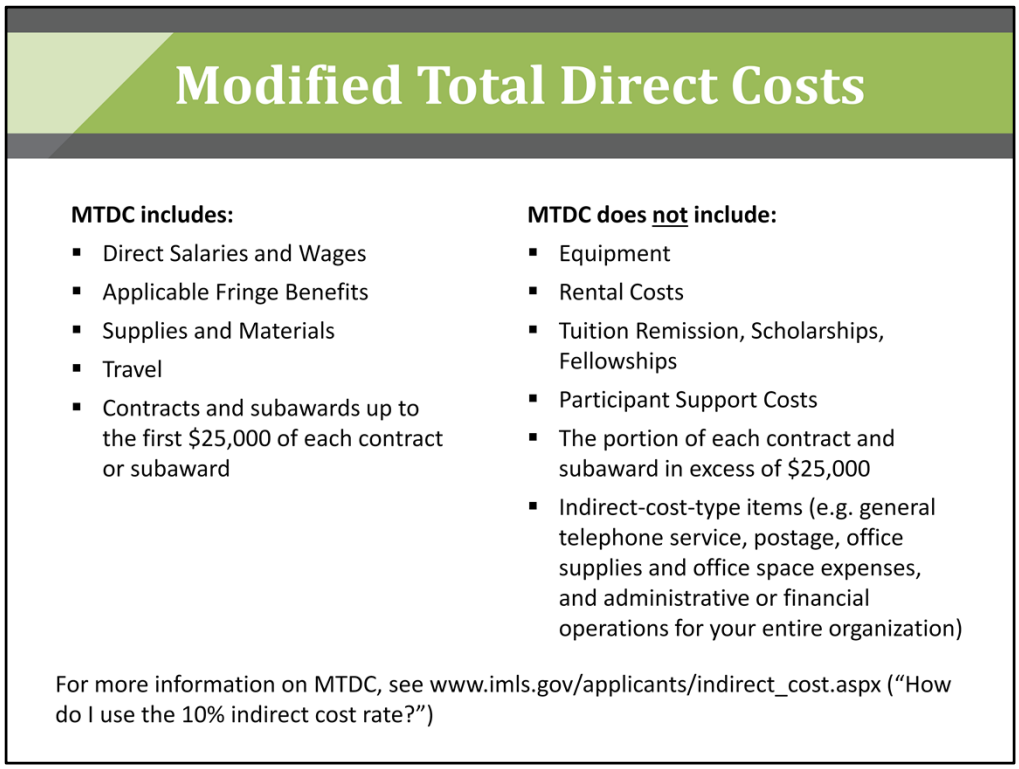
Institute of Museum and Library Services OMB Number 3137-0071, Expiration Date: 09/30/2015

1. Use a current indirect cost rate that you have negotiated with a federal agency.
2. Use an indirect cost proposal that has been submitted to a federal agency but is not yet approved.
3. Use a rate not to exceed 10% of **modified total direct costs** (MTDC) if you have never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate and you are not subject to other requirements, such as those in place for states, local governments, and Indian tribes.
4. Not include indirect costs at all in your budget.

For more information on indirect costs, see www.imls.gov/applicants/indirect_cost.aspx.

One aspect of budget preparation that we get lots of questions about is that of Indirect Costs. Please notice that you have four options for calculating Indirect Costs, which are explained in detail in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. You may:

1. Use a current indirect cost rate that you have negotiated with a federal agency.
2. Use an indirect cost proposal that has been submitted to a federal agency but not yet negotiated.
3. Use a rate not to exceed 10% of modified total direct costs if you have never had a federally negotiated indirect cost rate and you are not subject to other requirements, such as those in place for states, local governments, and Indian tribes.
4. Not include indirect costs at all in your budget.



If you are using the 10% indirect cost rate, it is important to understand what the modified total direct costs are.

Modified total direct costs include

- Direct Salaries and Wages
- Applicable Fringe Benefits
- Supplies and Materials
- Travel
- Contracts and subawards up to the first $25,000 of each contract or subaward

They do NOT include:

- Equipment
- Rental Costs
- Tuition Remission, Scholarships, Fellowships
- Participant Support Costs
- The portion of each contract and subaward in excess of $25,000
- Indirect-cost-type items (e.g. general telephone service, postage, office supplies and office space expenses, and administrative or financial operations for your entire organization)

For more information on MTDC, see www.imls.gov/applicants/indirect_cost.aspx ("How do I use the 10% indirect cost rate?")

Budget Justification

- Use the 10 categories of expenses on the IMLS Budget Form to organize your Budget Justification.
- Identify the purpose for each expense and explain how you arrived at each cost.
- Take as much space as you need, and make it easy to read.
- DO NOT use the Budget Justification to detail staff qualifications or to justify your project.
- Review "Guidance for Writing a Budget Justification" at www.imls.gov/applicants/budget_justification.aspx

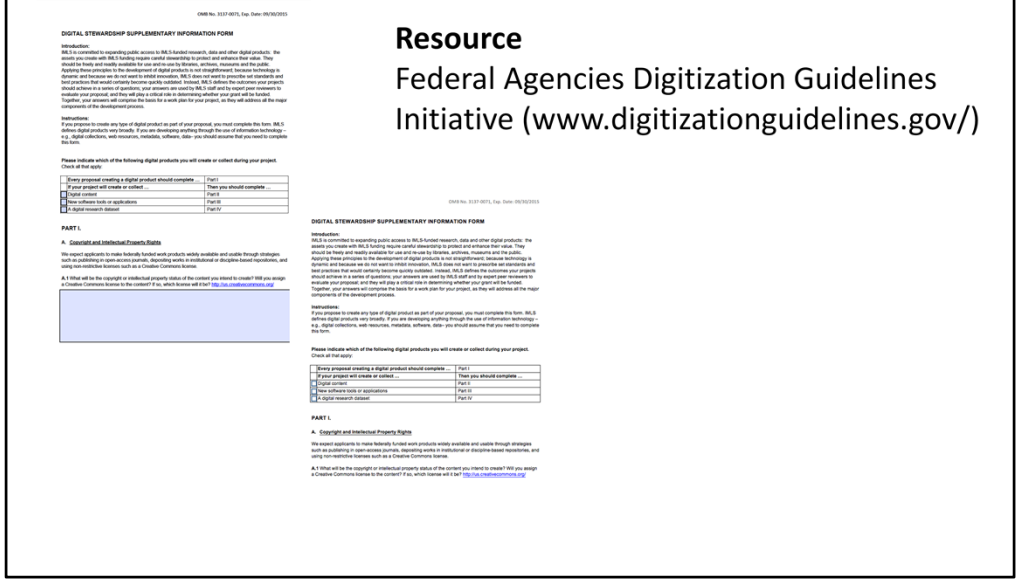
The Budget Justification is a very important part of your application and is a Required Document. Peer reviewers will use it to evaluate the appropriateness of the financial resources you have identified as necessary for your project, and IMLS staff will use it to check your calculations and to make determinations regarding the allowability of specific expenses according to the appropriate set of cost principles.

Your Budget Justification should coordinate closely with your IMLS Budget Form in format and content. It should identify the purpose for each expense and explain how you arrived at each cost, including any that you may have consolidated and summarized on the Budget Form.

Because there is no page limit on this document, take as much space as you need and make it easy to follow. **DO NOT, however, use the Budget Justification to list qualifications of staff or to justify your project.**

We strongly recommend that you consult the Guidance for Writing a Budget Justification, which you can access at www.imls.gov/applicants/budget_justification.aspx. It makes solid recommendations for how to structure your Budget Justification and what content should be included.

Digital Stewardship Supplementary Information Form



Resource

Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines Initiative (www.digitizationguidelines.gov/)

If your project includes creating a digital product of any kind—digital collections, web resources, metadata, software, or a digital dataset--you should complete and submit the Digital Stewardship Supplementary Information Form as a Supporting Document. It is available on our website as both a fillable PDF and a Word document; the choice of which to use is yours. This five-part form makes it easy for reviewers and for IMLS to understand how you will create your digital products and how you will make them available for use and re-use by others.

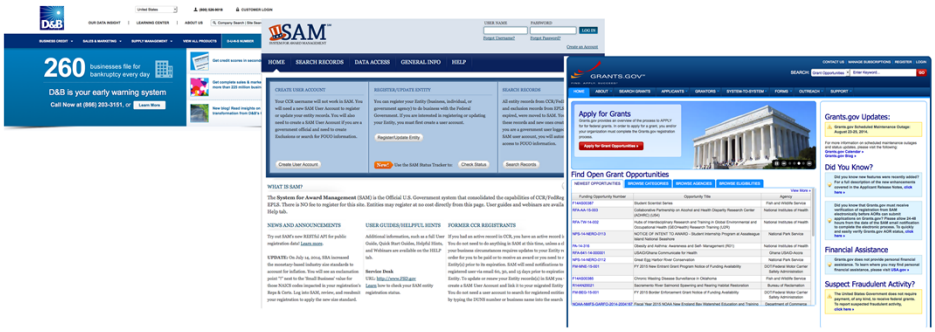
Because technology is dynamic and because we do not want to inhibit innovation, we do not want to prescribe set standards and best practices that would certainly become quickly outdated. Instead, we ask a series of questions about your digital stewardship project, and your answers will be used by IMLS staff and by peer reviewers to evaluate your proposal. You need to complete the sections that align best with your project.

There are many resources available for digitization projects these days. You may find the Federal Agencies Digitization Guidelines helpful at www.digitizationguidelines.gov.

Application Tips

Register early!

1. D-U-N-S® Number: **www.dnb.com/us**
2. SAM Registration: **www.sam.gov**
3. Grants.gov Registration: **www.grants.gov**



At this point, we'd like to share a few tips gleaned from our collective experience in working with applications submitted to the MFA program each year.

First on the list, and by this time coming as no surprise, is "Register early!" You must have a DUNS number, an active SAM.gov registration, and a current and functional Grants.gov registration, and you'll need them in this order. In other words, you must have a DUNS number to register with SAM.gov. You must have an active SAM.gov registration to register with Grants.gov. And you must have a functional Grants.gov registration to submit an application to IMLS.

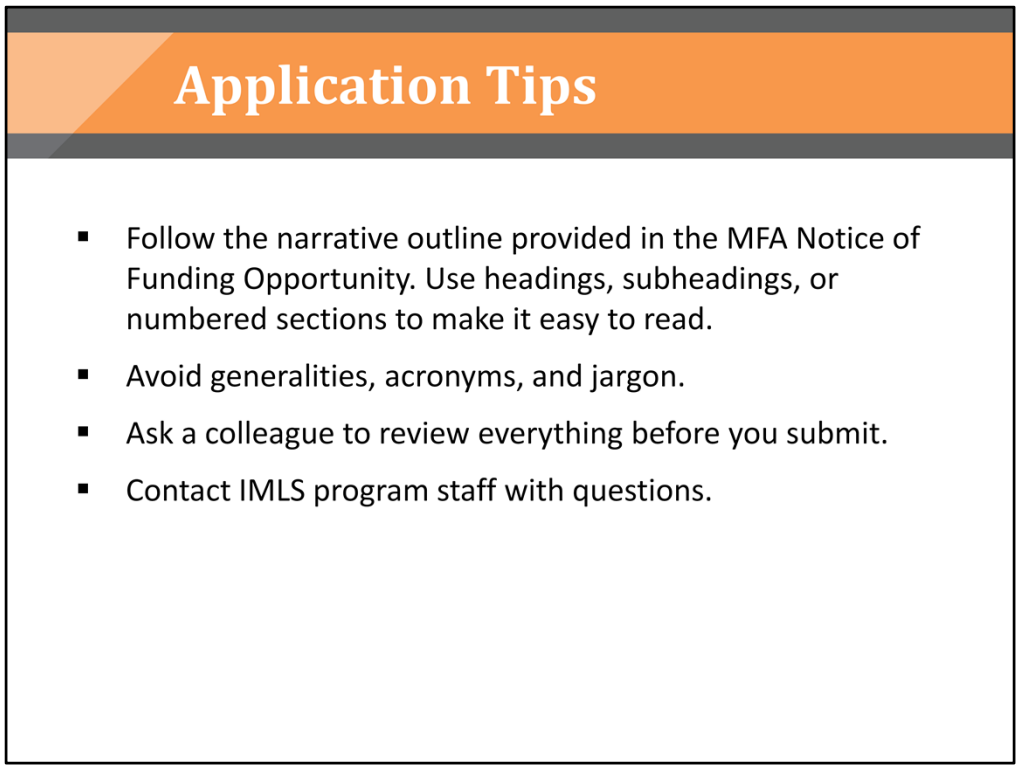
It's also crucial to remember that your SAM.gov registration expires each year and you must renew it. You can log into SAM.gov at any time and find out your status. I would recommend doing that today.

Application Tips

- Be certain your project goals relate to the goals of MFA and the project category to which you are applying.
- Take time to carefully research and articulate the need for your project.
- Prepare your Budget Form and Budget Justification carefully and make sure that numbers match narrative statements.
- Identify consultants and other key personnel by name, where possible.
- Provide a job description and outline the selection process for positions you will fill through grant funding.

Separate and apart from registration matters, we have these suggestions to offer.

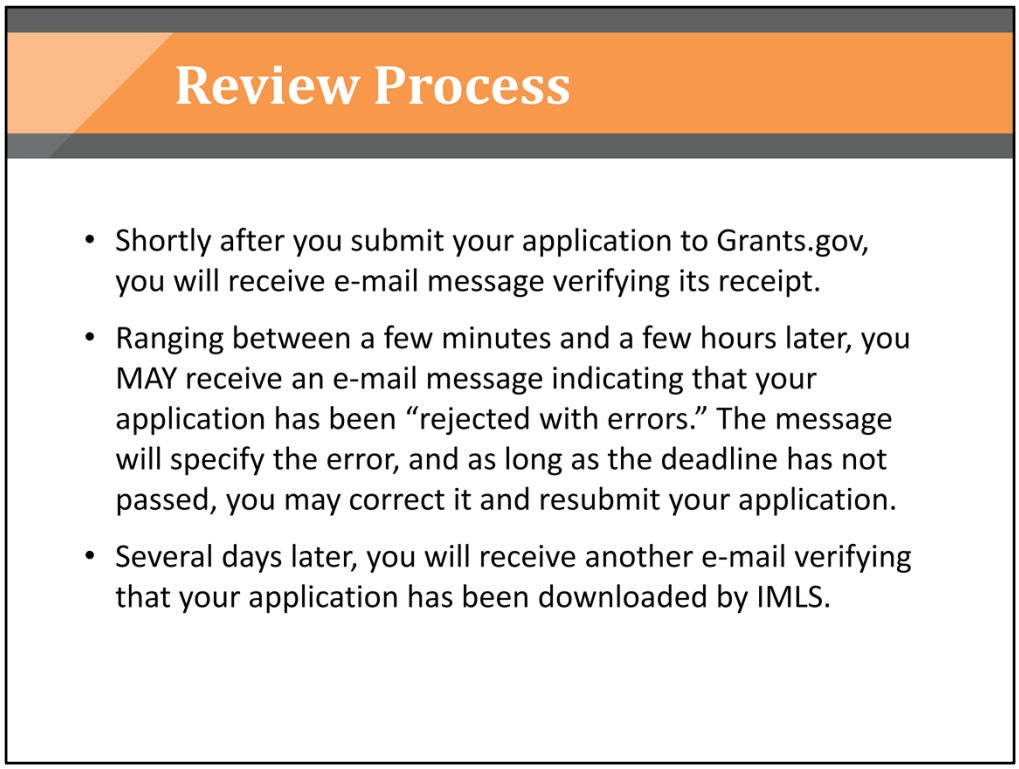
- Be certain your project goals relate to the goals of MFA and the project category to which you are applying.
- Take time to carefully research and articulate the **need** for your project.
- Prepare your Budget Form and Budget Justification carefully and make sure that numbers coordinate with your narrative statements.
- Identify consultants and other key personnel by name, where possible.
- Provide a job description and outline the selection process for positions you will fill through grant funding.



- Follow the narrative outline provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections to make it easy for reviewers to read.
- Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon. The people who will review your application are experts, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular field's shorthand. Make it easy for them to understand what you mean.
- Ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seeing this for the first time
- Contact IMLS program staff for assistance at any time during the process. We'll be happy to help wherever we can.

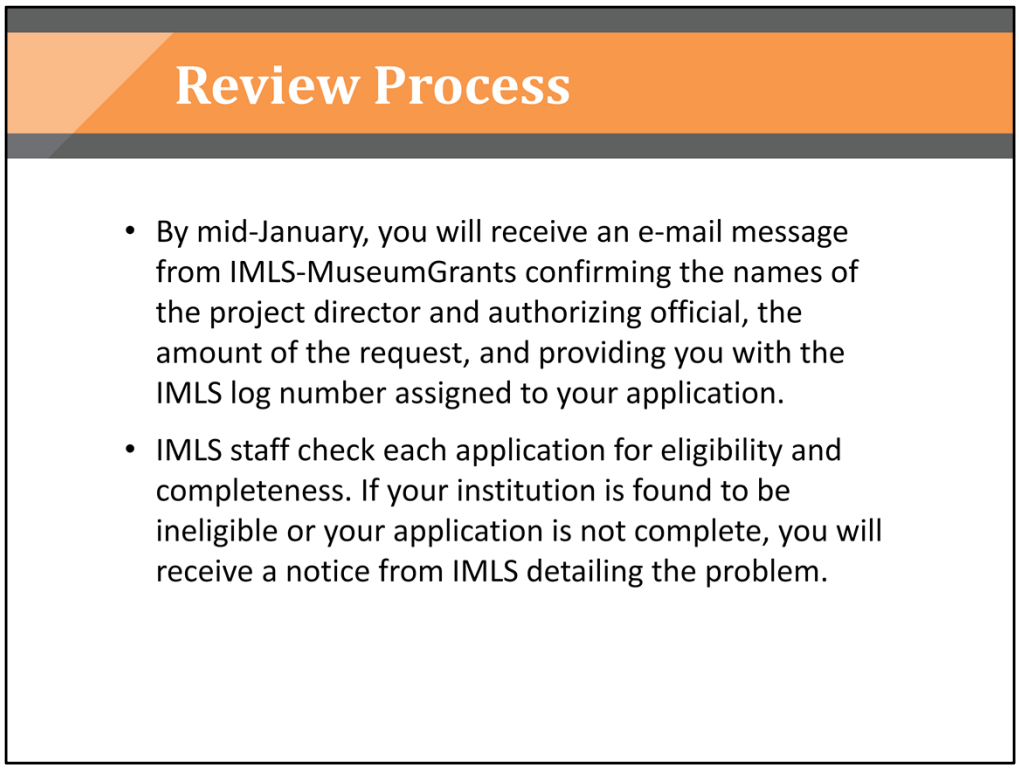
Please be aware that by law, IMLS can make grants only to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments on or before the deadline. These are givens and not negotiable.

Our best advice, then, is to start everything early; upload your application to Grants.gov WELL before December 1, 2014; and check what you've uploaded against the Table of Application Components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. If you need to add or change something, you can resubmit as many times as you need to up to 11:59 pm on December 1. We'll process the last one you put in.



Once you’ve submitted your proposal, you may wonder what happens next.

- Shortly after you submit your application to Grants.gov, you will receive e-mail message verifying its receipt.
- Ranging between a few minutes and a few hours later, you MAY receive an e-mail message indicating that your application has been “rejected with errors.” The message will specify the error, and as long as the deadline has not passed, you may correct it and resubmit. This is another reason to submit early and not wait until the last day. If you receive a “rejected with errors” message the morning of December 2, you can’t do anything about it.
- Several days later, you will receive another e-mail verifying that your application has been downloaded by IMLS.

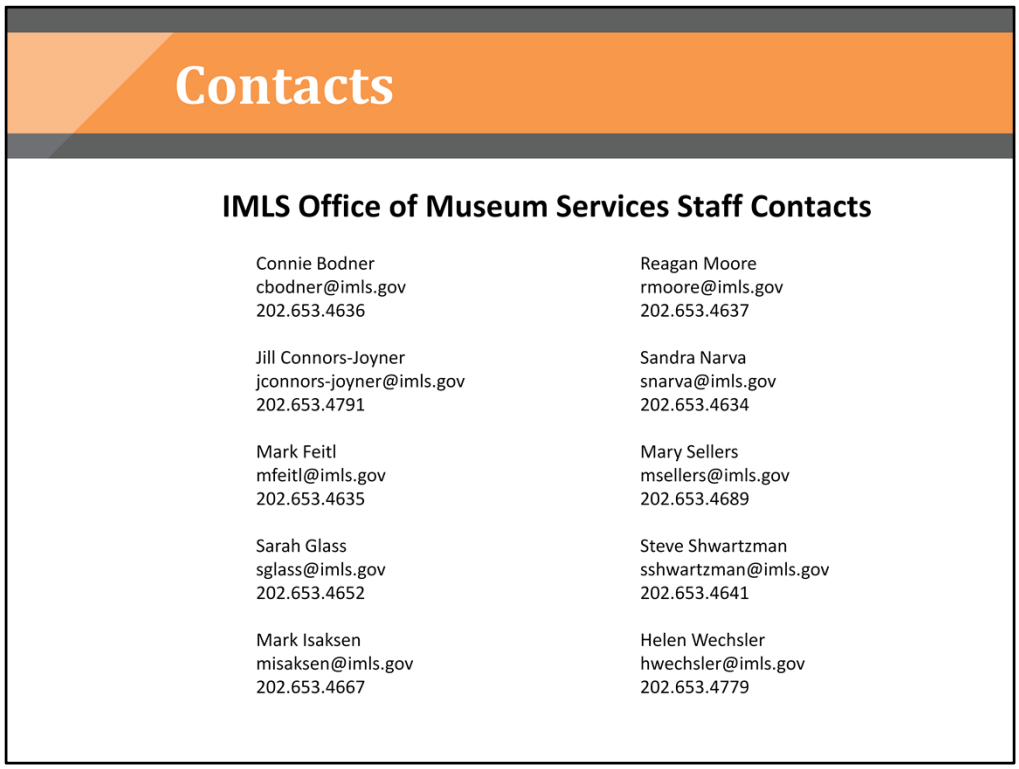


- By mid-January, you will receive an e-mail message from IMLS-MuseumGrants confirming the names of the project director and authorizing official, the amount of the request, and providing you with the IMLS log number assigned to your application. We ask you to check this information over and let us know if anything disagrees with what you submitted.
- At this point, IMLS staff check each application for eligibility and completeness. If your institution is found to be ineligible or your application is not complete, you will receive a notice from IMLS detailing the problem.

Review Process

- Experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers score your eligible and complete applications and provide comments based on the criteria outlined in the program Notice of Funding Opportunity. Reviews may take place in one or two tiers.
- Reviewers use the review criteria provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the MFA reviewer materials posted on our website.
- By law, the IMLS director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions and does so in August.
- You will be notified by e-mail of the award decision in September 2015. You will receive the scores and comments provided by each reviewer.

- Experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers score all eligible and complete applications and provide comments based on the criteria outlined in the program Notice of Funding Opportunity. Reviews may take place in one or two tiers.
- Reviewers use the review criteria provided in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and the MFA reviewer materials posted on our website.
- By law, the IMLS director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions and does so in August.
- All applicants will be notified by e-mail of the award decision in September 2015. Each applicant will receive the scores and comments provided by each reviewer.



Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS and in Museums for America, and we hope you have found the information in this webinar helpful. Here is a listing of the names, email addresses, and direct phones for program staff in the Office of Museum Services, and we encourage you to contact us with any questions you might have. We'll be very happy to help.

INSTITUTE of Museum and Library SERVICES

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