

## Timed Transcript for IMLS Office of Museum Services Webinar: Museums for America FY 2021 Information Session

0:01

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, "Museums for America Grant Program Fiscal Year 2021 Information Session."

0:11

My name is Steve Shwartzman, and I am pleased you could join me today, and that you are interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Museums for America grant program.

0:20

Our goal in this presentation is to provide specific information about the Museums for America grant program and make some recommendations that you may wish to consider when preparing your application.

0:32

Since this is a pre-recorded webinar and you won't have the opportunity to ask questions, feel free to contact me or any of the other staff in the Office of Museum Services to seek answers to your questions or to discuss a project idea.

0:48

The staff listing slide with contact information is shown later in this webinar.

0:56

This is one of a series of pre-recorded webinars designed to help you find the information you need to create a competitive application for IMLS museum funding.

1:07

"Choosing a Funding Opportunity for Fiscal Year 2021" was pre-recorded and is available as a video and as a PDF of the slides, plus a transcript, on our website at the link identified here.

1:21

In that webinar, we cover the IMLS vision, mission, and strategic plan with an emphasis on how they influence our grantmaking.

1:29

We also address institutional eligibility; provide a quick overview of all of our funding opportunities; how to find information online with a focus on our website; and we cover the three places you must be registered in order to apply for an IMLS grant.

1:46

We strongly recommend that you view this webinar carefully to get the complete picture of preparing and submitting a competitive application to Museums for America. In addition to this recorded webinar, we are providing pre-recorded webinars for all of our grant programs. A complete calendar for the live presentations is provided in our pre-recorded webinar, "Choosing a Funding Opportunity for Fiscal Year 2021." You may access them afterwards by visiting WWW dot IMLS dot gov backslash webinars, hyphen archive.

2:22

Before we jump into the details, we're often asked about numbers of applications and funding success rates, and so here are the figures for the just completed Fiscal Year 2020 Museums for America grant cycle.

2:36

As you can see, with just over nineteen point six million dollars available, we were able to fund over 31% of the applications we received.

2:49

In this presentation, we will be addressing the following topics: MFA Program Goals; Characteristics of Successful MFA Projects; Important Dates and Times;

3:01

The questions of How Much and How Many; Project Categories; Allowable and Unallowable Costs, what you can and cannot include in your project;

3:11

Application Components; Application Tips; The Review Process; and IMLS Staff Contact Information.

3:24

Museums for America, or MFA, is our largest grant program, receiving the largest number of applications each year, and the one through which we make the largest number of awards. The overall goal of the program is to support activities that strengthen the abilities of individual museums to serve their publics.

3:42

This might be through activities that reflect museums as active resources for lifelong learning, as institutions important in improving the well-being of their communities, or as good stewards of the nation's collections.

3:55

MFA is all about what your museum needs in order to better serve your public.

4:01

It may well be exactly the same as what the museum across town or in a neighboring state may need, and that's OK. The important thing here is that our support should help you make a local impact.

4:18

With this focus on supporting the individual museum, what are the characteristics of successful MFA applications? There are four, and successful projects exemplify all of them as well.

4:33

As you prepare your application, you should keep these characteristics in mind.

4:37

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

4:52

Institutional Impact. The project addresses a key goal identified in the institution's strategic plan.

4:58

In-depth Knowledge. The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

5:06

Project-based Design. The work plan consists of a set of logical, inter-related activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge.

5:17

Demonstrable results. The project generates measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

5:31

Here are important dates relating to MFA applications. Applications must be received through Grants dot gov by 11:59 PM Eastern Time on November 16, 2020.

5:43

The date is non-negotiable. The time-stamp is auto-generated by the Grants dot gov system, and we have no ability to override it.

5:52

We will say this over and over again, but start early and submit your application early. That way, if you encounter a difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem and resubmit.

6:07

MFA awards will be announced in August 2021, and MFA projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September, 2021.

6:16

Please make sure that everyone involved in preparing your grant application is aware of these dates.

6:26

Regarding how much money you may request, there is only one option in MFA.

6:31

All requests must be between \$5,000 and \$250,000, including both direct and indirect costs. If you ask for less than \$5,000 or more than \$250,000, your application will most likely be rejected and not reviewed.

6:47

Requests to Museums for America must have at least a 1 to 1 non-federal cost share.

6:52

Cost share can take a number of forms. Among them are cash, staff time, volunteer time, third-party contributions, grants from foundations, and support for the state or local government. Cost share cannot come from other federal sources.

7:10

In terms of how many applications you may submit, there is no limit to the number of applications you can file in response to the Fiscal Year 2021 funding announcement for Museums for America.

7:24

We have made reference several times to "projects" here, so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means. The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is: a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.

7:42

They go on further to explain that a project is temporary because it has a defined beginning and end in time, and therefore defined scope and resources. And a project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

8:03

We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project.

8:08

Think of it as a temporary, non-routine set of activities, which collectively have a beginning and an end in time, a defined scope requiring specific resources, and which are designed to accomplish a specific, singular goal.

8:28

With that concept of "project" in mind, let's turn to project categories. Second to choosing to apply to the Museums for America grant program, this is likely to be the most important decision you make about your application.

8:42

As you can see here, there are three options: Lifelong Learning, Community Anchors, and Collections Stewardship and Access.

8:52

Please note that Community Anchors was revised from last year's Community Anchors and Catalysts, while Collections Stewardship and Access was revised from last year's Collections Stewardship and Public Access.

9:05

Why is your decision about which project category to choose so important?

9:09

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.

9:22

In short, the entire review process team incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the category you've identified. It's an important choice, and it's important to get it right.

9:38

So, let's take a look at what kinds of activities a project in each of these categories might include. A project in Lifelong Learning might include, but is not limited to: design and fabrication of an exhibit; program development for all types of audiences; creating interpretive plans; media; training for teachers; partnerships with schools or out-of-school audiences; or program evaluation.

10:03

As you plan your project in the category, we strongly recommend starting with the concept of "learner at the center," and build around it.

10:12

Spend time really thinking through who your learners in this project are and what their needs are. It's not likely going to be "everybody," so, who is it, really?

10:22

What do they want to learn? And what do you want them to learn? And what's the best way to achieve that goal? We'll get to the whole idea of problems and needs in a few minutes, but a major takeaway here is to be focused on identifying your audience and thinking about how you're going to serve them.

10:44

A Community Anchors project is likely to include activities that contribute directly to your institution's functioning as an essential partner in addressing community needs. As you scan this list, you'll see the word "community" in nearly every entry.

10:58

Simply saying you plan to be welcoming to your community or you plan to serve your community is not likely to be enough.

11:05

Reviewers should be able to see clearly that you have involved members of your community in planning your project and that you'll continue to involve them in its implementation and evaluation.

11:15

So, if your project involves exhibitions or interpretive programs, how do you know if your project fits best within Lifelong Learning or Community Anchors? We get this question a lot.

11:26

After all, a significant part of the work involves creating exhibitions and delivering programs. Which category should you pick?

11:35

We suggest this test: If the motivation for doing the project comes from within your institution, then you might well be looking at a Lifelong Learning project.

11:44

If the motivation for doing the project comes from outside your institution, generated by your community and a need they have identified, then you might have a Community Anchors project. Both approaches are legitimate, and both are fundable.

11:59

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

12:10

The primary difference between a Lifelong Learning project and a Community Anchors project is a Community Anchors project is one that strives to resolve an issue within a community that is most often identified by the community.

12:23

For example, an immigrant community may have trouble assimilating into your community and looks towards your museum to help develop an exhibit and/or related programming for the general community to learn about their people and the contributions they make to the overall well-being of the community.

12:38

Another example might be that your community is suffering from serious health-related issues like Alzheimer's or dementia in seniors, or obesity in children that some sort of joint community-museum partnership can work to help solve or at least improve the well-being of those affected through some form of programming.

12:55

Perhaps homelessness is an issue in your community, or a high poverty rate, joblessness, or social justice concerns that you feel must be addressed, again, in partnership with the community, with the betterment of the community being your primary goal.

13:09

Community Anchors projects are more external. Lifelong Learning projects are more internal and provide support for all types of education projects that the previous slide already identified, but the primary goal of Lifelong Learning is generally not the overall improvement of the community by addressing a community need.

13:34

Our third project category is that of Collections Stewardship and Access, and this includes just about anything you need to do for and with collections, except acquire them.

13:44

We are very open to projects that have multiple components configured in ways that make sense to you.

13:51

One project might consist of cataloging, taking digital photographs, and updating database records, while another might combine digitization activities with rehousing.

14:02

We invite applications for projects that involve preparing to mitigate the impact of natural and man-made disasters on collections and collections information.

14:10

This might be planning and training in emergency preparedness; developing networks for response; executing strategies for recovery; and/or developing resilience in preparation for the next time.

14:23

We support conservation projects of all kinds: general, detailed, and environmental surveys, as well as treatments and environmental improvements. And you're welcome to incorporate aspects of training and/or collections management into these projects if doing so makes sense for your situation.

14:42

It's important to note that in this project category, we encourage a step-by-step, progressive approach to collections work, including conservation.

14:51

This means assessing needs, creating a prioritized list of activities, and following through by doing the most important things first.

15:05

Before we close our discussion of project categories, we want to mention our guidance for projects that could belong logically in more than one category.

15:15

Sometimes it's tough to choose, and you might be tempted to think that the best strategy would be to align with more than 1, 2, and maybe even three. We advise against this for several reasons. First, the project categories have different goals and we expect that projects aligned with each will address different problems, use different approaches, and will measure success in achieving the intended results in different ways.

15:41

Second, not only do our instructions for applicants differ for each category, but so does our guidance for reviewers.

15:50

So, how can you choose the best category for your project?

15:53

Here are three things we suggest you try.

15:56

Think carefully about what is in the center of your project. Is it the learner? Will people who engage with you as a result of your project, let's say to create a new exhibition and related programming, acquire new knowledge, develop a skill, or experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit?

16:15

Or is it the community that's in the center of your thinking? Is your project one that will address an important community need, and are you doing it because you believe your museum can make a difference?

16:25

Or is your project about the collections? Will your project result in a better managed, better cared for, or more accessible set of objects or specimens?

16:38

A second way to go about this might be to think about who you want to review your application.

16:43

If you apply under Lifelong Learning, we will put your application in front of museum educators, exhibits professionals, interpretive specialists, and professionals with deep experience and understanding how people learn in museum environments.

16:58

If, however, you would rather we assign your application to a combination of experts in civic engagement and social justice, community outreach, and collective impact, then it may push you towards Community Anchors. And if you apply under Collections Stewardship and Access, you can be confident that your application will be reviewed by some combination of registrars, collections managers, curators, conservators, or collections information specialists. If that seems appropriate, then this is most likely your best choice.

17:29

Still undecided?

17:30

A third strategy to try might be to make a list of all the activities you plan to carry out, then assign each to a project category, and then count to see where most of these activities occur and where most of the time and money will be spent. That might provide you with your answer.

17:46

Our most important advice, then, is to choose one project category, study the instructions for preparing an application as well as review criteria for that category, and write your proposal accordingly.

17:58

As always, if you have questions, call the IMLS staff to discuss them.

18:10

We'll turn now to allowable and unallowable costs for your project. Be very careful in preparing your proposal and include only allowable costs in both your IMLS request and your cost share.

18:21

To do otherwise can hurt your chances of getting positive reviews and being recommended for funding. We'll go through some common expenses that are allowable and unallowable, but for details, please see Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter 2, Part 200 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Covering Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards, or "2 CFR 200" for short.

18:52

Fortunately, the regulations are available online in a searchable format on the U.S. Government Publishing Office website and a tiny URL link is listed on this slide. Of particular interest is Subpart E, Cost Principles, a small section of which is shown on the right side of this slide.

19:15

In the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs as listed here.

19:23

These costs may be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for and/or what you will pay for as part of your cost share. The rules about allowability apply to both sides of your budget.

19:39

We also provide a list of generally unallowable costs, again both for IMLS funds for cost share.

19:45

These costs may not be part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, nor can they be part of what you will pay for as part of your cost share. In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

19:58

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 you have specific questions, please contact us and we'll be happy to help.

20:19

Next up are application components. Your application will consist of a series of individual documents, and it's very important to make sure you prepare and submit everything you should.

20:29

These application components fall into three categories in Museums for America.

20:34

The first is that of Required Documents. All applications must include the documents listed here. Omission of even just one might result in your application's rejection.

20:45

Also important to note are page limits. If you exceed the page limit specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we must remove the extras before your application goes out for review. That means your reviewer may well see a paragraph or a sentence in mid air and will wonder about your organizational skills and your attentiveness to detail.

21:08

We often see this with resumes, so if you're requesting resumes from staff, outside contractors, or consultants, please make sure they are two pages maximum.

21:19

So, make sure your content fits into the page limits specified and make sure the number of pages holds when you convert your document to a PDF.

21:33

The second category of application components is that of Conditionally Required Documents. Some applications must include 1, 2, or even all four of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours.

21:48

If you're applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your proof of nonprofit status issued by the Internal Revenue Service.

21:57

If you're using a federally negotiated indirect cost rate in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final rate agreement.

22:06

If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a Digital Product Form.

22:16

If you are requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and/or formal conservation treatment proposals.

22:26

Just like the Required Documents, omission of even one might result in your application's rejection.

22:33

Please note that the term "digital product" includes: 1, digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; 2, software; and 3, research data.

22:47

Please see the form itself for the more specific examples. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the form with your application.

23:02

The third group of application components is Supporting Documents, and here is a partial list of examples. Supporting Documents are completely optional. You may submit some or none.

23:13

We urge you to 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.

23:27

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. More is not necessarily better. Being judicious really does work to your benefit. Include what is important and helpful, and stop there.

23:51

Let's turn to two specific documents that you will need to prepare from scratch, and by that we mean they are not forms.

23:59

As you've seen, these are not all the documents you need to submit, but they are very important ones and the ones about which applicants seem to have the most questions.

24:09

First, is a Strategic Plan Summary.

24:13

As you read the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, you will see frequent references to strategic plans or strategic goals. IMLS wants to help you achieve your goals, and indeed, we've seen that one of the characteristics of a successful MFA project is addressing a key need or challenge that faces your museum and whose resolution is identified in your strategic plan.

24:39

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.

24:51

To verify its legitimacy, we ask that you indicate when and by whom the plan was approved.

24:58

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 department.

25:08

Some inside advice: Use a narrative format for your Strategic Plan Summary. Although infographics and cleverly designed imagery might be just the thing for communicating your strategic plan to some audiences, it typically doesn't work well for our reviewers. These two pages are all they have, and they tell us they find a well-constructed, thoughtful, written summary the best way to confirm connections to your project. Make it easy for them to see them.

25:40

Now, let's talk about the Narrative of your proposal. You have seven pages to cover three very important issues, and you should use all seven.

25:50

The Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the Narrative should cover. The specifics differ for each project category, like Lifelong Learning, Community Anchors, and Collections Stewardship and Access, so you should make sure you're following the guidance for the category you've chosen.

26:09

On the left side of the slide are the questions we ask you to address in your Narrative, and on the right side are the points we ask reviewers to evaluate. It's good practice to consider both sides when you're putting together your application.

26:24

In this first section of the Narrative, you should lay out the reasoning for your project.

26:29

This is where you describe the problem that you're setting out to solve or the need that you're going to address, and you tell us how you know it deserves attention.

26:39

You might do this by citing published research, previous studies, or data gathered by your organization or by others. You should be crystal clear in identifying who or what will benefit from your project, because every activity you identify in the work plan and every result you propose to achieve should have an obvious connection to this problem and the beneficiaries you identify.

27:08

Because the need, problem or challenge is foundational in your application, keep these points in mind.

27:16

The federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.

27:21

As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.

27:30

Will someone learn something? Develop a skill, or change an attitude?

27:35

Will members of your community be better able to work together to solve problems?

27:39

Will collections be better cared for? Will their lifespan be extended? Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded?

27:49

Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.

27:53

Hone your problem definition carefully in clear, succinct terms. Gather and present data that support your problem definition.

28:07

This is where you identify who will do what activities, when, and using what resources. We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project and tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. We'll say more about that in a few minutes.

28:24

We want you to explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your proposed results and what you'll do if you need to correct course. And finally, reflecting the federal government's desire that everything in which we invest generate as broad a benefit as possible, we ask you to tell how and with whom you will share your project's results.

28:48

Your Work Plan will be built on activities, so it's important to be clear about just what an activity is. An activity is something that someone does. It has a beginning and an end, just like projects, and you know when you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done anymore. It is no longer on your to-do list. An activity is not a goal, a result, or an outcome.

29:13

Rather, it is something you do, as part of striving to achieve those. Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your projects. That might be hard, but strive for not too much, not too little, but rather, just right.

29:33

We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project and to tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning. Think of it as answering the question, "What if?"

29:45

There is no checklist of risks, but every project has them. The best proposals will show that you're aware of them and have thought through a plan for dealing with them.

29:56

Look at your activities and think about what could go wrong. Focus on the ones where your experience, your own or that of your group, tells you, "Yes, that could happen," and identify steps you would take in response.

30:10

IMLS knows things go differently than expected. We just want you to prepare by identifying viable options. Here are some examples of risks that might be part of a project for which you might seek MFA funding.

30:25

A project may be dependent upon fundraising to generate the cost share, but it is not complete by the time the application is submitted.

30:33

What will the institution do if that money is not available by the time the project gets underway?

30:38

A project may be structured around university interns, who will be selected and trained according to well thought-out processes.

30:46

What will happen if one or more interns drops out? What's the plan for replacing them mid-project?

30:53

A project to rehouse collections into new museum-quality collections storage furniture might run into delays in preparing the space or in the delivery of the cabinets. What happens to the collection items then? How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?

31:10

A project depends on your community partners to achieve success, but one partner drops out in the project. What do you do now?

31:24

The third section of your Narrative should be devoted to articulating your project's intended results.

31:29

This section is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better.

31:35

The need or problem you identified in your Project Justification will be addressed directly, and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

31:44

We ask you to tell us what data you collect and report in order to measure your project's success.

31:50

If your project will generate tangible products, and most do, here's the opportunity to describe them and make the case that they will be useful.

31:59

And last but not least, we ask that you tell us how you will sustain the benefits of the project. How will this improvement that you propose to make continue once your grant is over?

32:17

We often hear that defining intended results and success measures is challenging for applicants, so it's worth spending a bit of time on this here.

32:27

Let's think back to the questions we referenced a couple of slides ago when we talked about defining the need, problem, or challenge your project is addressing.

32:36

If you said someone will learn something, how will you know? If your problem related to segments of your community being better able to work together, how will you know when that has been achieved?

32:48

If collections will be better cared for, how will you be sure, and how will you measure "better"?

32:55

If you're digitizing to expand accessibility, how will you know when you've done it?

33:01

All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge. You may well experience tangential benefits and/or positive outcomes, but make sure you identify them as "in addition to" and not "instead of" your original, intended results. Reviewers are likely to see that as a disconnect.

33:22

This focus on results and measuring success in meaningful ways is not new, but it hasn't gotten easy.

33:29

There has been a tremendous amount of work done on ways to measure success, and we as an agency are still working on this.

33:36

For you as an applicant though, we encourage you to consider using a logic model to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

33:49

Many MFA applicants use logic models and reviewers appreciate their conciseness and focus. There are many excellent resources available to help you construct a logic model, and among these are IMLS' "Shaping Outcomes," a free online course developed in partnership with Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis. It is available at WWW dot shaping outcomes dot org, and it is customized to meet the needs of museum applicants. There are downloadable worksheets and numerous examples that you are likely to find relevant to your own work.

34:26

So, to recap: Your Narrative has three sections: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have seven pages for it. Again, use all seven pages.

34:41

The sections are equally important. Write clearly, address what we ask you to address, and keep an eye on those review criteria. We're telling you exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it.

35:02

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.

35:10

First on the list, make sure your registrations are complete and your passwords and usernames are current. You must have a DUNS number, an active SAM dot gov registration, and a current and functional Grants dot gov registration, and if you're just starting out, you'll need to acquire them in that order. In other words, you must have a DUNS number to register with SAM dot gov. You must have an active SAM dot gov registration to register with Grants dot gov.

35:38

It's crucial to remember that your SAM dot gov registration expires each year, and you must renew it. You can check your status at any time by going to WWW dot SAM dot gov.

35:50

In addition, your Grants dot gov password expires every 60 days and leaving accounts inactive for a year or more can result in the removal of all account roles.

35:59

So, make sure, you know who your Grants dot gov Authorized Organization Representative is, and be sure the username and updated password are in place. Both the SAM dot gov and Grants dot gov websites have robust help features and FAQs.

36:21

Some important things to know:

36:23

Our regulations state clearly that we can make grants only to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments, on or before the deadline.

36:34

Those are the concepts we must live by. So, here are some tips to help ensure that you can, too.

36:41

Start early. You've already done that by viewing this webinar, but don't lose momentum. Keep going.

36:49

Become familiar with the Grants dot gov Workspace. This has been available as an option for a couple of years now, and it is now the only option. It has many good features, including upfront validation, which allows you to correct errors prior to submission, and the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application.

37:07

Consider starting with the Workspace overview and check out the tutorials.

37:12

Do your background research. Make it easy for the reviewers to see that you are up to date and know what you're talking about.

37:20

Revisit the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently and follow the narrative outline it provides. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your Narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read.

37:33

Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon. 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.

37:46

Check your spelling, grammar, and math. It counts with reviewers.

37:50

Ask a colleague, preferably one that is unfamiliar with this application, to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit. Ask them to act like a reviewer who is seeing this for the first time.

38:03

Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the Table of Application Components in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and then check it again.

38:12

Submit to Grants dot gov early, so you can correct any errors and avoid any trauma created by technology challenges.

38:25

This is the general schedule of events to show what happens to your application once we receive it. IMLS staff will review it for completeness and eligibility, and you will hear from us via e-mail if there are any problems.

38:37

From February through June, your experienced and knowledgeable peers will provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity. IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants. We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums and the IMLS Director.

38:59

By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this happens in July. In August, we will notify you via e-mail of the award decisions, and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers. And on September 1st, 2021, funded projects begin.

39:28

Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS and in Museums for America, and we hope you found the information in this webinar helpful.

39:36

Here is a listing of the names, e-mail addresses, and direct phone numbers for program staff in the Office of Museum Services. We encourage you to contact us with any questions you might have about what you've heard or seen in this webinar or in the online MFA materials. We'll be very happy to help.

39:53

So, with that, we wish you good luck and we look forward to seeing your application in November.