Timed Transcript for IMLS Office of Museum Services Webinar: Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services FY 2021 Information Session

0:04
Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, "Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Fiscal Year 2021 Information Session."

0:14
My name is Mark Feitl. I'm a Senior Program Officer in the Office of Museum Services, and speaking on behalf of the rest of the staff in the Office of Museum Services, we're delighted that you are interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Grant Program. I will be referring to the program throughout the presentation as NANH, the abbreviation of the program title.

0:40
Our goal in this presentation is to provide specific information about the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant program and make recommendations that you may want to consider when preparing your application.

0:54
"IMLS OMS Choosing a Funding Opportunity for FY 2021" is one of several pre-recorded webinars designed to help you find the information you need to create a competitive application for IMLS museum funding. It is also available as a PDF of the slides, plus transcript, and is on our website at the link pictured here.

1:15
In that webinar, we cover the IMLS vision, mission, and strategic plan with an emphasis on how they influence our grant making.

1:23
We also address institutional eligibility, provide a quick overview of all our funding opportunities, discuss 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.

1:38
We strongly recommend that you take a look and listen to this webinar to get the complete picture of preparing and submitting a competitive application to the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program.

1:53
We are often asked about the number of applications and funding success rates, so here are the figures for the past five years.

1:59
As you can see, NANH has had a somewhat consistent increase in appropriated funding over time. We seek to award the strongest proposals with the greatest potential to strengthen tribal museum services.

2:12
Looking back to the beginning of the program in 2005, the first year we made awards, we have received 572 applications.

2:20

Of those, 366 have received grants, which has totaled over $17 million in funding to support the museum services of tribes, Native Alaskan villages and corporations, and Native Hawaiian serving organizations.

2:33

To date, awards have been made to organizations located in 30 states.

2:42

In this presentation, I'll be addressing the following topics: program goals and eligibility; characteristics of successful NANH projects;

2:52

Important dates and times; the questions of how much you may request in funding; how many applications you can submit and how long your project can last;

3:01

Allowable and unallowable costs; application components; application tips; the review process; and finally, our IMLS staff contact information.

3:24

Let's begin with NANH program goals. The goal of the NANH orogram is to support projects that enhance museum services in order to assist tribes and organizations that primarily serve Native Hawaiians to provide opportunities to sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge through strengthened activities in areas such as exhibitions, educational services and programming, professional development, and collections stewardship.

3:57

Unlike other museum programs offered at IMLS, the NANH program has very specific eligibility criteria.

4:04

All applicants must meet Tribal Organization eligibility criteria. I encourage you to read the specific eligibility noted on our website.

4:16

Now, for more detail on eligibility factors. An organization is eligible to apply to this program only if they are a federally recognized Indian tribe, as identified by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, an Alaska Native Village or corporation, or a non-profit organization that primarily serves and represents Native Hawaiians. Organizations are not eligible to apply if they are a museum, library, school, tribal college, or department of education, but eligible institutions are welcome to partner with a non-eligible organization.

4:49

The applicant organization must meet the eligibility criteria, but the partners are not required to do so.

4:59

Now, we'll get into characteristics of successful Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Service applications.

5:04
There are four, and successful projects addressed all of them well. As you prepare your application, you should keep these characteristics in mind.

5:13
First, Institutional Impact. Your project should address a key need or challenge that faces your organization.

5:20
Second, In-depth knowledge. Your proposal should reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.

5:29
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 measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

5:48
It has been our experience that an unfunded application is one that has failed to deliver convincingly one or more of these, so it's a good idea to think about how to structure your application to show how your project will be strong in each.

6:06
We want to remind you of important dates for NANH applications. They are due by 11 59 PM Eastern Time on November 16th, 2020.

6:15
The deadline is non-negotiable, and the time stamp is auto generated by the Grants dot gov system.

6:21
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 you're submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem.

6:32
NANH awards will be announced in June 2021, and projects must be scheduled to start July 1st, 2021.

6:44
NANH applicants can request anywhere from $5,000 to $100,000 in grant funds.

6:50
There is no cost share requirement, though you may include one if your organization will contribute funds toward this particular project.

6:57
However, if you decide to include a cost share in your application, it must be met by the end of the award. We will hold you to that figure, so keep that in mind when applying.

7:06
Cost share may be in the form of cash, staff or volunteer time, or third-party contributions. It may not be funds from another federal source.

7:15
You may not request more than $100,000 in funding for this particular program. This maximum covers the total length of your project activities. It is not a per year maximum.

7:25
The second question is, how many applications you may submit? There is no limit on the number of applications your museum may submit to any NANH. However, you may compete against yourself during the review process.

7:36
And you may also be wondering how long the project may last. NANH projects must be at least a year long, but not exceed two years in length.

7:48
We have made reference several times to "projects" here, so let's take a minute to consider just exactly what that means.

7:55
The Project Management Institute has a good definition, which is: a temporary endeavor undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result.

8:04
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.

8:13
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.

8:22
We recommend that you keep this definition in mind as you conceptualize your IMLS project.

8:27
Think of it as temporary non-routine sorts 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.

8:42
There are no project categories for this program. We invite you to apply for projects that best meet your needs.

8:48
This is a partial list of many projects we can fund. They are all linked to the overarching goals of the IMLS strategic plan. A comprehensive list of project types can be found on page four of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

9:06
We'll turn now to allowable and unallowable costs for your project.

9:09
Be very careful in preparing your proposal and include only allowable costs in both your IMLS ask and your cost share. To do otherwise can hurt your chances of getting positive reviews and being recommended for funding.

9:22
We'll go through some common expenses that are allowable and unallowable, but for details, please see Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter Two, 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.

9:42
Fortunately, the regulations are available online in a searchable format on the U.S. Government Publishing Office website, which is listed on the screen.

9:51
Of particular interest is Subpart E, Cost Principles, a small section of which is shown on the right side of the screen.

10:01
In the NANH Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs as pictured here.

10:08
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 if you choose to include one.

10:16
The rules about allowability apply to both sides of the budget.

10:23
We also provide a list of generally unallowable costs, again both for IMLS funds and for cost share.

10:29
These costs may not be a part of what you ask IMLS to pay for, nor can they be part of what you will pay as part of your cost share.

10:37
In fact, unallowable expenses can't show up anywhere in your proposal.

10:41
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.

10:53
If, after that, you have specific questions, please contact us, and we'll be happy to help.

11:02
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.

11:12
These application components fall into three categories in the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services application package.

11:19
The first is that of required documents. All applications must include the documents listed here. Omission of even just one can result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

11:30
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.

11:40
That means your reviewer may well see a paragraph or a sentence end in mid air and will wonder about your planning skills and your attentiveness to detail.

11:48
Make sure your content fits into the page limits specified and make sure the number of pages hold when you convert your document to a PDF.

11:56
Two of our required forms were introduced for the first time last year.

12:00
You will complete them through Grants dot gov, and they are dynamic forms, meaning that your answers to certain questions will determine which questions you see next.

12:08
These are the IMLS Supplementary Information Form, including abstract, and the IMLS Museum Program Information Form.

12:16
These replace the IMLS Program Information Sheet that had long been a part of our application.

12:24
The second category of application components is that of conditionally required documents.

12:28
Some applications must include 1, 2, or a combination of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours.

12:36
If you are a non-profit organization that primarily serves and represents Native Hawaiians, then you must include your proof of non-profit status issued by the IRS, as well as appropriate Proof of Eligibility documentation outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

12:51
If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost in your budget, then you must include a copy of your current rate agreement.

12:58
If you are creating digital products during the course of your project, then you must submit a Digital Product Form.

13:05
If you are requesting support for conservation treatment, then you must include detailed condition reports and/or formal conservation treatment proposals.

13:13
Just like the required documents, omission of even one can result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

13:20
Please note that the term "digital product" includes digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; software; research data.

13:30
Please see the form itself for more specific examples. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the form with your application.

13:43
The third group of application components is supporting documents, and here is a partial list of examples.

13:50
Supporting documents are completely optional. You may submit some or none. 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.

14:05
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.

14:14
Being judicious really does work to your benefit. Include what is important and helpful, and stop there.

14:27
And now, let's talk about the Narrative of your proposal. You have five pages to cover three very important issues, and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the Narrative should cover.

14:39
In this section of the Narrative, the Project Justification, 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; how your project will strengthen museum services; and how your project will address the goals of the NANH program.

14:59
Remember, the core of the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program is to strengthen a Tribe's or Native Hawaiian organization's museum services.

15:10
Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well you explain your project; how well you identify 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;

15:25
And if this involves an audience of some kind, whether they've been appropriately involved in the planning; whether your project strengthens museum services in ways that are specific, actionable, and measurable.

15:37
If you're applying for a collections-based project, be sure to describe and quantify the collections and/or records that will be the focus of your project.

15:44
Please note that you are required to add $3,000 per year in award funding for travel within the NANH budget to attend an IMLS-designated grantee meeting.

15:58
Because the need, problem, or challenge is foundational in your application, keep these points in mind.

16:04
The federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.

16:09
As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.

16:16
Will someone learn something, develop a skill, change an attitude? Will members of your community be better able to work together to solve problems? Will collections be better cared for? Will their lifespan be extended?

16:28
Will access to your collections and the information surrounding them be expanded?

16:31
Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.

16:36
Hone your problem definition carefully in clear and succinct terms, and gather and present data that support your problem definition.

16:48
The Project Work Plan is the part of the Narrative in which you relay who will do what, when, and with what using what resources.

16:56
We ask you to tell us what specific activities you will undertake; who will plan, implement, and manage your project;

17:03
When and in what sequence your activities will occur; what financial personnel and other resources you will need to carry out the activities;

17:11
How you will track progress for achieving your performance goals and intended results; and how and with whom you will share your project's results.

17:19
Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well your activities are informed by appropriate theory and practice;

17:26
Whether the team you put together has the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully; and whether your schedule of work is realistic and achievable.

17:34
They will also be looking at whether the time, personnel, and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project.

17:42
They will look at your proposed evaluation and performance measurements and will weigh in on whether it will result in valid and reliable findings; 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?

18:06
Your work plan will be built on activities, so it's important to be clear about just what an activity is.

18:12
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.

18:23
An activity is not a goal, a result, or an outcome. Rather, it is something you do as part of striving to achieve those.

18:30
Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities. That might be hard, but strive for not too much, not too little, but rather, just right.

18:44
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.

18:51

Thinking of it as answering the question, "What if?" There is no checklist of risks, but every project has them. The best proposals will show that you are aware of them and have thought through a plan for dealing with them.

19:04

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 then identify steps you would take in response.

19:16

IMLS knows things go differently than expected. We just want you to prepare by identifying implementable options.

19:27

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

19:33

This is your chance to convince the reviewers that your project will result in something getting better. The need or problem you identified in your project justification will be addressed, and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

19:45

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

19:51

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

19:59

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

20:13

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

20:21

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

20:39

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

20:45

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

20:49

All of your results should tie back to your need, problem, or challenge.

20:53

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.

21:06

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

21:12

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

21:29

Some NANH applicants use logic models, and reviewers appreciate their conciseness and focus. There are many excellent resources available to help you construct a logic model, andamong these are IMLS's "Shaping Outcomes,"a free online course developed in partnership with Indiana University-Purdue University of Indianapolis.

21:49

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.

22:04

So, to recap: Your Narrative has three sections, Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, and you have five pages for it. The sections are all equally important, so don't get any of them short shrift.

22:18

Write clearly, address what we ask you to address, and keep an eye on those review criteria.

22:24

We're telling you here exactly what the reviewers will look for, so make it easy for them to find it and understand it.

22:34

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

22:42

First on the list, make sure your registrations are complete and your passwords and usernames are current.

22:48

You must have a DUNS number, an active SAM dot gov registration, and a current and functional Grants dot gov registration.

22:57
And if you are just starting out, you will 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.

23:10
It's crucial to remember that your SAM dot gov registration expires each year and you must renew it.

23:15
You can check your status at any time by going to WWW dot SAM dot gov. 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.

23:32
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.

23:41
Both the SAM dot gov and Grants dot gov websites have robust help features and FAQs.

23:52
Our legislation states that we can make grants only to eligible applicants that submit complete applications, including attachments, on or before the deadline. So, start early.

24:04
You've already done that by participating in this webinar, but don't lose momentum. Keep going.

24:09
Next, become familiar with Grants dot gov's Workspace. This has been available as an option for a couple of years now, and it is now the only option.

24:19
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.

24:29
Consider starting with the Workspace Overview and check out the tutorials.

24:34
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.

24:42
Revisit the NANH Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently, and follow the narrative outline it provides. Use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections to make it easy for reviewers to read.

24:54
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, so make it easy for them to understand what you mean.

25:07
Check your spelling, grammar, and math. It counts. 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.

25:21
Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the Table of Application Components, and then check it again.

25:28
Finally, submit to Grants dot gov early so you can correct any errors and avoid any possible issues caused by technology challenges.

25:40
This is the general schedule of events to show what happens to your application once we receive it.

25:46
IMLS staff will review it for completeness and eligibility, and you'll hear from us via e-mail if there are any problems.

25:53
From January through March, experienced and knowledgeable peer reviewers will provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the NANH Notice of Funding Opportunity.

26:03
IMLS staff will examine budgets, financials, and your track record with past and current grants.

26:09
We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for Museums and the Director.

26:15
By law, the IMLS Director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions, and this happens in May.

26:23
In June, we notify all applicants by e-mail of the award decisions, and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

26:31
Project Directors and Authorizing Officials of funded applications receive award packets, and on July 1st, 2021, funded projects begin.

26:44
Thank you very much for your interest in IMLS and in the Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services grant program, and we hope you have found the information in this

webinar helpful. Here are the e-mail addresses of the two IMLS staff assigned to the NANH program.

26:59
Laura and I are happy to answer any questions you may have.

27:02
Good luck and we look forward to seeing your application in November.