



# Museums Empowered

FY 2023 Information Session

August 2022

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services' webinar, "IMLS Museums Empowered Fiscal Year 2023 Information Session."

My name is Mark Isaksen – I'm one of the program staff in the Office of Museum Services -- and speaking on behalf of rest of the staff, we are glad that you are interested in preparing an application for the IMLS Museums Empowered grant program.



# Agenda

- Where to Find Information
- Program Overview
- IMLS Funding Eligibility Criteria
- Program Goals
- Project Activities
- Allowable and Unallowable Costs
- Application Components
- Narrative Review Criteria
- Where to Learn More
- Application Tips & Next Steps

Here are the topics we will cover in today's webinar:

- Where to Find Information
- Program Overview
- IMLS Funding Eligibility Criteria
- Program Goals
- Project Activities
- Allowable and Unallowable Costs
- Application Components
- Narrative Review Criteria
- Where to Learn More
- Application Tips & Next Steps



## Companion Webinar

### IMLS OMS: Choosing a Funding Opportunity

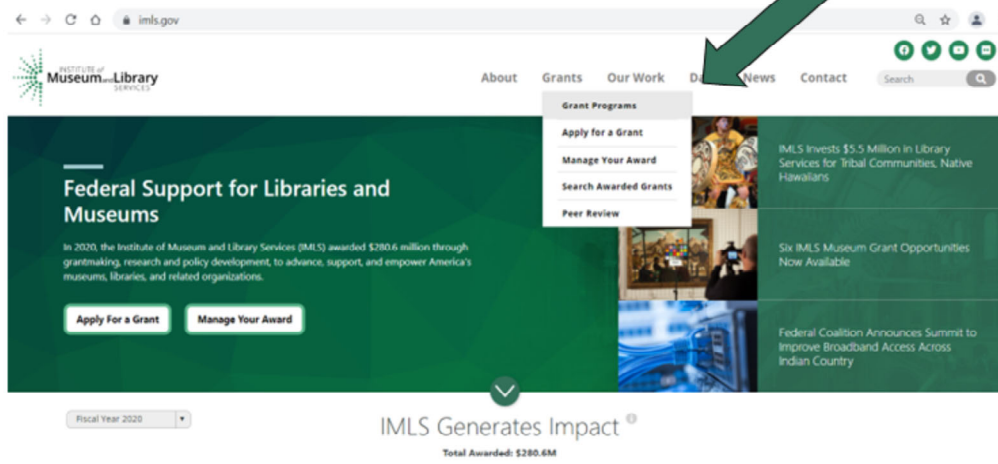
- *Basic information for all applicants*
- <https://imls.gov/webinars/imls-office-museum-services-choosing-funding-opportunity-fy-2023>

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

“Choosing a Funding Opportunity for FY2023” is available as a video and as a PDF on our website at the link identified here. In that webinar, we cover the IMLS vision, mission, and strategic plan. We also address institutional eligibility for applicants, provide a quick overview of ALL our funding opportunities, show you how to find information online with a focus on our website, and we cover the places you must be registered in order to apply for an IMLS grant.

In addition to this webinar about Museums Empowered we are making available on-demand webinars for all our museum grant programs, which are available on our website.

# Where to Find Information www.ims.gov



The IMLS website is an important place to find information

When you go to the website you will see a drop down menu for GRANTS on our home page. Click on the section titled "Apply for a Grant." This section of our website is for you.

# Notice of Funding Opportunity



Home > Grants > Apply for a Grant  
> Museums Empowered: Professional Development Opportunities for Museum Staff

## Museums Empowered: Professional Development Opportunities for Museum Staff

**Deadline:** November 15, 2022  
**Application:** The FY 2023 Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) (DOC 644K3) is now available.  
**Grant Amount:** \$5,000-\$250,000  
**Grant Period:** Up to three years  
**Cost Share Requirement:** You must provide funds from non-federal sources in an amount that is equal to or greater than the amount of your IMLS request.

**Program Overview:**  
Museums Empowered: Professional Development Opportunities for Museum Staff is a special initiative of the Museums for America grant program. It is designed to support projects that use the transformative power of professional development and training to generate systemic change within museums of all types and sizes.

Museums Empowered has four project categories:

- **Digital Technology:** Provide museum staff with the skills to integrate digital technology into museum operations.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Support museum staff in providing inclusive services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities.
- **Evaluation:** Strengthen the ability of museum staff to use evaluation as a tool to shape museum programs and improve outcomes.
- **Organizational Management:** Strengthen and support museum staff as the essential part of a resilient organizational culture.

**Program Contacts:**



## MUSEUMS EMPOWERED: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR MUSEUM STAFF FY 2023 NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

<b>Federal Awarding Agency</b>	Institute of Museum and Library Services
<b>Funding Opportunity Title</b>	Museums Empowered
<b>Announcement Type</b>	Modification of FY2022 Notice of Funding Opportunity
<b>Funding Opportunity Number</b>	ME-FY23
<b>Assistance Listing Number</b>	45-305
<b>Application Deadline</b>	Submit through Grants.gov by 11:59 p.m. U.S. Eastern Time on November 15, 2022.
<b>Anticipated Date of Notification of Award Decision</b>	August 2023 (subject to the availability of funds and IMLS discretion)
<b>Beginning Date of Period of Performance</b>	Projects must begin on September 1, 2023.

<b>Table of Contents</b>	
A. Program Description	2
B. Federal Award Information	5
C. Eligibility Information	5
D. Application and Submission Information	7
E. Application Review Information	18
F. Award Administration Information	20
G. Contacts	21
H. Other Information	23
Appendix One - IMLS Assurances and Certifications	23
Appendix Two - Guidance for Required Registrations	27
Appendix Three - Guidance for Completing Forms and Other Application Components	28
Appendix Four - Guidance for Creating a Digital Privacy Plan	37
Appendix Five - Conflict of Interest Requirements	39
Appendix Six - Keywords	40

IMLS Grants No. 3137-0307, Revision Date: 01/31/2024

Each grant program has a landing page on the IMLS website. Here you will find a brief overview of the grant program along with contact information for the IMLS staff assigned to this grant program. Our contact information includes a link you can use to directly schedule on our calendar a 30 minute counseling call with a program staff person. Counseling calls are an opportunity for you to discuss your project ideas and raise any questions you have about the application process. We encourage you to use this link to schedule a time to talk with one of us. We know that applying for a federal grant can be a complex and time-consuming process, and we want you to feel confident in moving forward with an application.

Also on the grant program landing page you will find a link to the PDF of the Notice of Funding Opportunity. The Notice of Funding Opportunity (sometimes referred to as the NOFO) is the official instructions and guidance for how to prepare, complete, and submit an application for funding.

The text and information I am using in this webinar derive from the instructions and guidance found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. A NOFO is available for each of the grant funding opportunities.

Now let's discuss the Museums Empowered grant program in more detail.



## Program Goals

Museums Empowered is a special initiative of the MFA grant program.



Designed to strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public.

Using the transformative power of *professional development* and training to generate *systemic change* within museums of all types and sizes.

Museums Empowered is a special initiative of the Museums for America grant program. It is designed to support projects that use the transformative power of professional development and training to generate systemic change within museums of all types and sizes. Projects are expected to involve multiple levels of staff, leadership, and volunteers in a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing a key need or challenge; reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about professional development; and generate measurable results.



## Application and Award History

### Summary of 2022 Grant Statistics

Number of applications: 49

Number of grants awarded: 20

Average Award amount: \$214,970

Total dollar amount awarded: \$4,299,396

Museums Empowered	2022 #	2022 %
Digital Technology	3	6%
Diversity & Inclusion	27	55%
Evaluation	7	14%
Organizational Management	12	24%
Total Applications	49	
Total Awards	20	41%

We are often asked about numbers of applications in a particular grant program so here are the figures for the just completed Museums Empowered grant cycle. In FY 2022 we made 20 awards for a total of \$4,299,396

#### Summary of 2022 Grant Statistics

- Number of applications: 49
- Number of grants awarded: 20
- Average Award Amount: \$214,970
- Total dollar amount awarded: \$4,299,396



## Museum Eligibility Criteria

All IMLS grant applicants must be either:

- a unit of State, local, or tribal government or
- a private nonprofit organization

To be eligible for funding as a **museum**, applicants must:

- ✓ use a professional staff;
- ✓ be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes;
- ✓ own or use tangible objects, either animate or inanimate;
- ✓ care for these objects;
- ✓ exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis; and
- ✓ conduct these activities in facilities that it owns or operates.

Funding eligibility criteria for the Museums Empowered program are detailed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, but I will try to summarize here. All IMLS grant applicants must be either a unit of state, local or tribal government, OR be a private non-profit organization. In addition to be eligible for funding as a “museum,” an organization must also:

- use a professional staff – defined as having at least one staff member, or the full-time equivalent, paid or unpaid, primarily engaged in the acquisition, care, or exhibition to the public of objects owned or used by the institution.
- be organized on a permanent basis for essentially educational or aesthetic purposes;
- own or use tangible objects, either animate or inanimate;
- care for these objects;
- exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis, at least 120 days a year; and
- conduct these activities in facilities that it owns or operates.

Museums as defined here may stand alone as independent organizations, may be non-profit organizations responsible for the operation of a museum, or they may be administered by a governing body, such as a college, university, or a state or local government.





## Program Goals

**Goal 1:** Provide museum staff with the skills to integrate digital technology into museum operations.

**Goal 2:** Support museum staff in providing inclusive services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities.

**Goal 3:** Strengthen the ability of museum staff to use evaluation as a tool to shape museum programs and improve outcomes.

**Goal 4:** Strengthen and support museum staff as the essential part of a resilient organizational culture.

Your application to the Museums Empowered grant program should align with one of the four programs and associated objectives. The four Museums Empowered program goals are:

Goal 1: Provide museum staff with the skills to integrate **digital technology** into museum operations.

Goal 2: Support museum staff in providing **inclusive** services to people of **diverse** geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities.

Goal 3: Strengthen the ability of museum staff to use **evaluation** as a tool to shape museum programs and improve outcomes.

Goal 4: Strengthen and support museum staff as the essential part of a **resilient organizational culture**

# Digital Technology



- Support staff learning and integration of digital communication platforms and social media tools to enhance audience engagement and community outreach.
- Support staff learning and integration of digital tools and services that enhance access to museum collections.

So let's take a look at each goal in a little more detail.

Goal 1 supports projects that provide museum staff with the skills to integrate **digital technology** into museum operations. This might involve activities that support **staff learning and integration of digital communication platforms and social media tools to enhance audience engagement and community outreach**; or activities that support **staff learning and integration of digital tools and services that enhance access to museum collections**. The emphasis here is on staff learning and integration of these new tools, not just on the acquisition of the new tools.

## Diversity & Inclusion



- Create training and learning opportunities that increase cultural competency of museum staff and enhance relevancy of museum programs.
- Develop and implement inclusive fellowship, internship, and mentoring programs to increase support for emerging professionals from diverse communities entering the museum field.

Goal 2 focuses on **diversity and inclusion** and supports projects that help museum staff in providing inclusive services to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities.

This might involve activities that create training and learning opportunities that increase cultural competency of museum staff and enhance relevancy of museum programs; or activities that develop and implement inclusive fellowship, internship, and mentoring programs to increase support for emerging professionals from diverse communities entering the museum field.

# Evaluation



- Increase staff knowledge of program evaluation methods and the usefulness of evaluation reports, tools, data and metrics.
- Provide museum staff with the tools and strategies to adapt evaluation methods to address a specific audience or institutional need.

Goal 3 supports projects helps that strengthen the ability of museum staff to use **evaluation** as a tool to shape museum programs and improve outcomes.

This might involve activities that increase staff knowledge of program evaluation methods and the usefulness of evaluation reports, tools, data and metrics; or activities that provide museum staff with the tools and strategies to adapt evaluation methods to address a specific audience or institutional need.



## Organizational Management



- Develop comprehensive organizational learning opportunities that address one or more emerging priorities facing a museum.
- Develop programs that address the specific learning and growth opportunities identified by staff needs assessments.

And goal 4 is about **organizational management** and is intended to support museum staff as the essential part of a resilient organizational culture

This might involve activities that help you to develop and implement comprehensive organizational learning opportunities that address one or more emerging priorities facing a museum; or activities that help you develop and implement programs that address the specific learning and growth opportunities identified by staff needs assessments.

# Choosing a Program Goal



Digital Technology



Diversity & Inclusion



Evaluation



Organizational Management

1. Think carefully about what is “in the center” of your project. Who or what will benefit from your work? What will be improved once you’ve finished your project?
2. Decide who you want to review your application. What kind of skill set and experience do you want them to have?
3. List all the activities you plan to carry out and assign each to a goal. Which goal gets the most? Where will most of the resources be spent?

Sometimes it’s tough to choose a goal, so here are a few strategies to help you select one that aligns best to your project:

1. Think carefully about what is “in the center” of your project. Who or what will benefit from your work? What will be improved once you’ve finished your project?
2. Decide who you want to review your application. What kind of skill set and experience do you want them to have?
3. List all the activities you plan to carry out and assign each to a goal. Which goal gets the most? Where will most of the resources be spent?

Why is your decision about which goal to choose so important? Because it impacts the review process. Your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in aligned with that goal. In addition, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same goal.

Our advice is to choose one program goal and write your proposal accordingly.

# Allowable Costs



## 2 CFR 200 Cost Principles

<https://www.ecfr.gov>

Subject 6—COST PRINCIPLES	
<b>General Provisions</b>	
\$200.400	Policy goals.
\$200.401	Application.
<b>Basic Considerations</b>	
\$200.402	Composition of costs.
\$200.403	Factors affecting allowability of costs.
\$200.404	Reasonable costs.
\$200.405	Allowable costs.
\$200.406	Applicable credits.
\$200.407	Prior written approval (prior approval).
\$200.408	Limitation on allowance of costs.
\$200.409	Special considerations.
\$200.410	Collection of unallowable costs.
\$200.411	Adjustment of previously negotiated indirect (F&A) cost rates containing unallowable costs.
<b>DIRECT AND INDIRECT (F&amp;A) COSTS</b>	
\$200.412	Classification of costs.
\$200.413	Direct costs.
\$200.414	Indirect (F&A) costs.
\$200.418	Required certifications.
<b>SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR STATES, LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND INDIAN TRIBES</b>	
\$200.416	Cost allocation plans and indirect cost proposals.
\$200.417	Interagency service.
<b>SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION</b>	
\$200.419	Costs incurred by states and local governments.
\$200.419	Cost accounting standards and disclosure statement.
<b>GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR SELECTED ITEMS OR COST</b>	
\$200.420	Considerations for selected items of cost.
\$200.421	Advertising and public relations.
\$200.422	Advisory councils.
\$200.423	Alcoholic beverages.
\$200.424	Alumni activities.
\$200.425	Audit services.
\$200.426	Bus costs.
\$200.427	Building costs.
\$200.428	Collection of program payments.
\$200.429	Commemorative and convocation costs.
\$200.430	Compensation—seasonal services.
\$200.431	Compensation—fringe benefits.
\$200.432	Conferences.

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 the IMLS grant funds and the cost share part of your budget.

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

The regulations are available online in a searchable format on the U.S. Government Publishing Office website listed on the screen.



## Allowable Costs

- personnel salaries, wages, and fringe benefits
- travel expenses for key project staff and consultants
- materials, supplies, software, and equipment related directly to project activities
- third-party costs
- staff and volunteer training
- internships/fellowships
- indirect or overhead costs

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

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 equally to the entire budget – in other words whether a cost item is on the grant funds side of the budget or the cost share side of the budget, the same rules of allowability apply to all line items in the budget.





## Unallowable Costs

- fundraising costs, such as development office staff devoted to general fundraising
- contributions to endowments
- general operating support
- acquisition of collections
- general advertising or public relations costs
- construction or renovation of facilities
- social activities, ceremonies, receptions, or entertainment

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

Remember to focus your budget – and the cost items you include there – on expenses that will occur during the period of performance (the duration of the grant award) and on expenses that are directly related to the activities in your proposed project.

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.



# Application Components

## **Required Documents**

**All** applications must include these. Omission of one results in exclusion from further consideration.

## **Conditionally Required Documents**

**Some** applications must include these. Omission of one results in exclusion from further consideration.

## **Supporting Documents**

These are **optional**. Include only those that supplement the narrative and supports the activities described in the application.

Now that you have some basic framework on the amount of funding and the allowable costs for your project, let's review the multiple parts of the grant application that you will need to prepare. The application components are a series of documents you will upload in Grants.gov that together make up your application.

These application components fall into three categories. The first is that of **Required Documents**. **All applications must include these**. Omission of even just one can result 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 can result in the exclusion of your application from further consideration.

The third group of application components are **Supporting Documents**. These are completely optional. Include only those that supplement your narrative and support the activities described in your application.

# Application Components

**Required Documents : All applications must include these.**

- Organizational Profile
- Strategic Plan Summary
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion
- Performance Measurement Plan
- List of Key Project Staff
- Resumes of Key Project Staff
- Budget Justification
- Application for Federal Assistance/Short Organizational Form (SF-424S)
- IMLS Supplementary Information Form (includes abstract)
- IMLS Museum Program Information Form
- IMLS Budget Form

Your application will consist of a series of individual documents, and it's very important to make sure you prepare and submit everything necessary to complete your application.

**All applications must include the 12 required documents listed on this slide.**

The 8 documents listed on left side of this slide are created by you, using a word document, and then saving this as a PDF. Instructions for all of these required documents are found in the Notice of Funding Opportunity. Many of these have page limits, and 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. 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.

The 4 required documents on the right side of the slide include the Application for Federal Assistance, the IMLS Supplementary Information Form, and the IMLS Museum Program Information Form which are online forms you complete in the grants.gov environment. The IMLS Budget Form is a fillable PDF.



## Application Components

These components are required of some applications.

- Proof of Private, Nonprofit Status
- Final Federally Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Digital Product Plan

The second category of application components is that of **conditionally required documents**. **Some** applications must include one or all of these, and it's your job to figure out which are required for yours.

- If you are applying as a nonprofit, then you must include your proof of nonprofit status issued by the IRS.
- If you are using a federally negotiated indirect cost in your budget, then you must include a copy of your final rate agreement.
- If you will create digital products during the course of your project, then you must complete and submit a Digital Products Plan. The term "digital product" includes (1) digitized and born-digital content, resources, or assets; (2) software; and (3) research data. If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the plan with your application.



## Application Components

### Supporting Documents

- These are optional.
- Include documents that supplement the narrative and support the project activities described in the application.

The third group of application components is **supporting documents**. Supporting documents are completely optional. This is not the place to introduce new information.

Some common items in this section might be letters of support from key stakeholders and project participants, executive summaries from studies or reports that have helped to shape your project design and bolster the project justification, or simply just a bibliography of references and related documents.

For example, an essential supporting document might be a letter of commitment from a consultant that you identified in the project work plan, with information that further describes their methodology or approach to the proposed project, or with a detailed cost estimate that further justifies their associated costs in the budget. Another example might be a letter of support from a key project partner – perhaps a community organization or other entity outside of the museum that will be an important part of the project activities. A letter describing their support of the project and providing background on the relationship between the partner organization and the museum would help reviewers understand the context in which the project will be implemented.

We also recommend that you be respectful of your reviewers' time so **include what is important and helpful ... and stop there**.

## Strategic Plan Summary

- Summary must be no more than two pages long
- Connect your proposed project activities to your institutional goals and objectives
- Identify the date and by whom the plan was approved
- Use a narrative format for your strategic plan summary



Let's turn to two specific documents that that are very important and about which applicants seem to have the most questions.

First is a **strategic plan summary**. IMLS wants to help you achieve your goals, and one of the characteristics of a successful Museums Empowered project is addressing 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. We also 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.

Use a narrative format for your strategic plan summary. Our reviewers tell us they find a well-constructed, thoughtful, written summary the best way to see the connection between your museum's strategic plan and your proposed project.



# Performance Measurement

## Performance Measurement

- How good a job did an organization do as a federal awardee?
- Helps us understand what level of performance is achieved by a specific project and by extension, a specific grant program

## Project Evaluation

- How successful was a project at achieving a set of specific intended results?
- Helps us understand and explain why we are seeing the results or outcomes in specific projects

The federal government recently added a new requirement to all federal awards. Agencies are now required to measure the performance of awardees. This Performance Measurement requirement is different from Project Evaluation, which is typically included in your project proposals.

Performance Measurement tells us how good a job you did as a federal awardee. It helps IMLS understand, manage, and improve our grant programs and the assistance we provide to applicants and awardees.

Project evaluation, by contrast, is all about your project intended results or outcomes. Project evaluation will be covered in the narrative part of your application, following the questions we ask in the NOFO, such as what need you are addressing and what associated results do you want your project to have, how you will track progress toward achieving your intended results, and how the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of your target audience will change as a result of your project.

But for now, let's turn now to our focus on **performance measurement** and how we will ask you to plan for it and report on it.

Performance Measure	Data We Will Collect (e.g., counts, costs, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, hours, observations, opinions, feelings)	Source of Our Data (e.g., members of the target group, project staff, stakeholders, internal/external documents, recording devices, databases)	Method We Will Use (e.g., survey, questionnaire, interview, focus group, informal discussion, observation, assessment, document analysis)	Schedule (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, beginning/end)
<b>Effectiveness:</b> The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results	<i>Example: At the end of each month, using a report prepared by the registrar, we will compare the cumulative count of rehoused objects against the total number proposed for the project.</i> <i>Example: At the end of each project year, our external consultant will present results of the ongoing observation-based evaluation and compare them against our intended project results.</i>			
<b>Efficiency:</b> How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group	<i>Example: Twice per year, we will assess our expenditures for program supplies on a per-person-served basis.</i> <i>Example: Each quarter, we will calculate the dollar value of volunteer hours contributed to the project as recorded in our online volunteer management system.</i>			
<b>Quality:</b> How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group	<i>Example: At the beginning, the mid-point, and end of the project, we will administer a satisfaction survey to staff who have participated in the training.</i> <i>Example: We will gather opinions about our online services through questionnaires provided to every 20<sup>th</sup> user.</i>			
<b>Timeliness:</b> The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe	<i>Example: Every six months, our Project Director will assess the fit between our proposed Schedule of Completion and actual activity completion dates.</i> <i>Example: Each quarter, each project partner will submit to our Project Director a templated report showing their progress on meeting project milestones.</i>			

In the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we provide a sample chart which applicants may, but are not required to use. On the left side of the chart are four commonly used Performance Measures that IMLS has adopted for this effort:

- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which activities contribute to achieving the intended results
- **Efficiency:** How well resources (e.g., funds, expertise, time) are used and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group
- **Quality:** How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group
- **Timeliness:** The extent to which each task/activity is completed within the proposed timeframe

Across the top are the information points we're asking you to use in your statements with examples of each. For instance, with "Data We Will Collect" are listed counts such as, costs, weights, percentages, and hours, as well as qualitative measures such as observations, opinions, and feelings.

For each performance measure, we provide a couple of examples addressing issues that might turn up in museum projects. The blank space is where we suggest you write your own performance measure statements. We are looking for one statement for each required performance measure. You may provide more than one statement per measure, if you wish. Keep in mind the performance measurement plan is limited to two pages.





## Narrative

In the Museums Empowered grant program the narrative is limited to 7 pages and is divided into three sections:

- **Project Justification**
- **Project Work Plan**
- **Project Results**

The questions we ask you to answer and the review criteria by which your application will be judged are posted in the Notice of Funding Opportunity on the IMLS website.

Among the required components of your application, the Narrative is the section that reviewers are likely to spend the most time reading. So let's examine the narrative section of the application. In the Museums Empowered grant program the narrative is limited to 7 pages and is divided into three sections:

- Project Justification
- Project Work Plan
- Project Results

The questions we ask you to answer and the review criteria by which your application will be judged are posted in the Notice of Funding Opportunity on the IMLS website.



## Narrative: Project Justification

### Tell us:

- Which program goal/project category and associated objective(s) of Museums Empowered will your project address?
- How will your project advance your museum's strategic plan?
- What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?
- Who is the target group for your project and how have they been involved in the planning?
- Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

### Project Justification

In this first 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; how your project will enhance the capacity of your institution; and how your project will address the goals of the Museums Empowered program – using professional development to generate systemic change within the museum.

In this section of the narrative, you will notice a distinction is made between “target group” and “beneficiaries”.

- “Target group” refers to those who will be most immediately and positively affected by your project. Identify the number of individuals in the target group or in each target group, if you identify more than one.
- “Beneficiaries” refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long-term by your project. They may or may not be the same as your “target group.” Identify the number of individuals who will benefit from your project in the long term, if reliable and defensible counts are possible. Otherwise describe the characteristics of the beneficiaries you expect to be served eventually by your project.



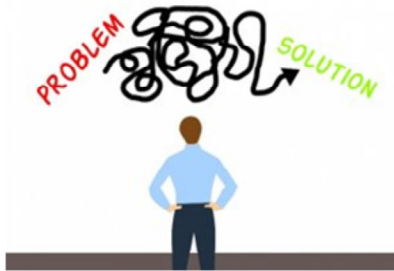
## Narrative: Project Justification

*Reviewers will look for:*

- Has the applicant selected an appropriate program goal/project category and one or more associated objectives of Museums Empowered?
- Are the ways in which this project advances the institution's strategic plan specific and measurable?
- How well has the applicant used relevant data and best practices to describe the need, problem, or challenge to be addressed?
- Are the project activities designed to use professional development and training to generate systemic change within the museum?
- Has the applicant appropriately defined the target group(s) and beneficiaries, as applicable, for this work?
- Have the target group and other project stakeholders been involved appropriately in planning the project?

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.

## Defining a need, problem, or challenge



- The federal government wants its investment to result in something getting better.
- Articulate what will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible.
- Identify why it is important that this change happens.
- Present data that support your problem definition.

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

- The federal government wants its investment to result in SOMETHING getting better.
- As you define your need, problem, or challenge, articulate WHAT will get better as a result of your project as precisely as possible. Will someone learn something, develop a skill, change an attitude?
- Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.
- Gather and present data that support your problem definition.



## Narrative: Project Work Plan

### **Tell us:**

- What specific activities will you carry out and in what sequence?
- What are the risks to the project and how will you mitigate them?
- Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?
- How is the project team organized and structured to support engagement of all participants?
- What time, financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?
- How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

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; how you will track progress toward achieving your intended results.



## Narrative: Project Work Plan

### ***Reviewers will look for:***

- Are the proposed activities informed by relevant theory and practice?
- Are the goals, assumptions, and risks clearly stated?
- Do the identified staff, partners, consultants, and service providers possess the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully?
- Is the proposed project team structured in a way that is equitable and mutually beneficial to those involved?
- Are the time, financial, personnel, and other resources identified appropriate for the scope and scale of the project?
- Is the proposed Performance Measurement Plan likely to generate the required measures of Effectiveness, Efficiency, Quality, and Timeliness?
- If present, does the Digital Products Plan reflect appropriate practices and standards for creating and managing the types of digital products proposed?
- Will the proposed methods for tracking the project's progress toward achieving the intended results allow course adjustments when necessary and result in reliable and measurable information about the results of the project?

Reviewers will evaluate your proposal on how well your activities are informed by appropriate theory and practice; whether the goals, assumptions and risks clearly stated.

Reviewers want to see that the team you've put together has the experience and skills necessary to complete the work successfully; and that your schedule is realistic and achievable. In this section you want to show how the project team is structured, is it equitable and mutually beneficial to those involved? Reviewers want to see how the project team organized to support engagement of all participants.

They'll also be looking at whether the time, personnel, and financial resources identified are appropriate for the scope and scale of the project. They will consider if you've described a clear methodology for tracking your progress and adjusting course when necessary.

## Defining an activity



- An activity is something that someone does.
- It has a beginning and an end.
- You know when you've finished it because it doesn't need to be done any more.
- Aim for a reasonable level of detail in identifying your activities—not too much, not too little, just right.

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 any more. It is no longer on your To Do List.

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

Aim for a reasonable level of detail in identifying your activities. Not too much, not too little, but rather just right.



## Narrative: Project Results

### Tell us:

- What are your project's intended results and how will they address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified?
- How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the target group change as a result of your project?
- What products will result from your project?
- How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance?

**Project Results:** The final section of your narrative should be devoted to articulating the impact of your project.

What specific results do you intend to achieve in order to address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified? Something will get better. Tell us what that is. Tell us about the tangible products that will result from your project, and how will you sustain the benefits of your project beyond the lifespan of this particular project?





## Narrative: Project Results

***Reviewers will look for:***

- Are the project's intended results clearly articulated, realistic, meaningful, and linked to the need, problem, or challenge addressed by the project?
- Is the plan to effect meaningful change in knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes solidly grounded and appropriately structured?
- Is it clear that the federal investment made through this grant will generate identifiable benefits to society?
- Will the products created by the project be made available and accessible to the target group?
- Is the plan to sustain the benefits of the project beyond the conclusion of the period of performance reasonable and practical?

Reviewers will give us their opinions on how well you've designed a feasible plan for collecting and reporting data; how likely the improvements that you've proposed will be realized; will the tangible products you plan to create be accessible to the target audience you identified; and whether your plan for sustaining the benefits of the project are reasonable and practical.

## Defining Intended Results



- Answer the question, “What will be better as the result of this work?”
- Consider how you will recognize success and how to measure it.
- Tie everything back to your need, problem, or challenge.
- Consider using a logic model to explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them.

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. Now is the time to answer the question “What will be better as a result of this work?”

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

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

A logic model is a useful tool to help explain your intended results and your plan for achieving them. Many reviewers appreciate seeing a logic model included as a supporting document in an application.



## Characteristics of Successful Applications

- ***Institutional Impact:*** The project uses the transformative power of professional development to generate systemic change within a museum.
- ***In-depth Knowledge:*** Applications reflect a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter.
- ***Project-based Design:*** Work plans consist of a set of logical, interrelated activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge identified in your application.
- ***Demonstrable Results:*** Projects generate measurable results that tie directly to the need or challenge it was designed to address.

In summary, considering all the components of your application, there are four general characteristics of successful Museums Empowered applications that reviewers will look for. As you prepare your application, keep these characteristics in mind.

First, **Institutional Impact:** Your project should use the transformative power of professional development to generate systemic change within a museum.

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

An application that has all of these four characteristics, will stand out in the review process, and will have the best chance of success for funding.

# Awarded Grants Search

The Awarded Grants Search gives you an opportunity to explore our archive of grants.

Home > Grants > Advanced Search

Search by Keywords...

Museum Empowered Professional Development Opportunities for Museum Staff FY 2021

Table DOWNLOAD THE DATA

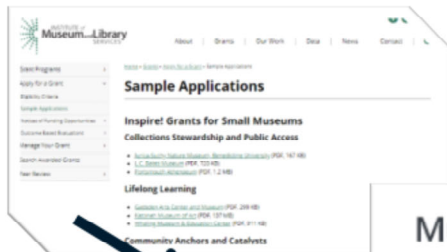
Note: (a) denotes an amendment made outside of the original award year Page 1 of 22 results

Log Number	Institution	Fiscal Year	Program	Federal Funds	Funding Office	City	State
ME-268297-GRS-21	Akron Zoo	2021	Museum Empowered Professional Development Opportunities for Museum Staff	\$67,790	Office of Museum Services	Akron	OH
ME-268571-GRS-21	Chicago Botanic Garden	2021	Museum Empowered Professional Development	\$250,000	Office of Museum Services	Glencoe	IL

We want to share with you, the places to look for more information, such as the IMLS website, where you can find the awarded grants search to learn more about the projects we have funded through the Museums Empowered program.

The Awarded Grants Search gives you an opportunity to explore our archive of grants that we have awarded in past years, and you can search this database using a variety of criteria such as institution name, location, and keyword. Your search will retrieve basic information about the award and a brief description of the project. This can be extremely helpful as you put ideas together for your own project.

# Sample Applications



Sample applications of recently funded grants are available on the IMLS website

## Museums Empowered

- [Boise Art Museum](#) (PDF, 649KB)
- [Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco](#) (PDF, 275KB)
- [Denver Museum of Nature and Science](#) (PDF, 1MB)
- [Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden](#) (PDF, 258KB)
- [Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago](#) (PDF, 401KB)
- [Phillips Collection](#) (PDF, 430KB)

We have also posted the narrative and schedule of completion from six successful applications from 2022. To find these examples, go to the Sample Applications on the IMLS website and scroll down the page to find the Museums Empowered examples.

# Sample Applications

MH 249065-OMS-21 Sample Application 2 / 10 100%

**IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture: Narrative**  
Museum of the African Diaspora

**1. Project Justification**  
**What do you propose to do?**

Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD) requests \$249,262 to expand its educational outreach program in the Classroom (MC). The program, entering its eighth year of operation, is an evidence-based program serving 1,200 third grade students each program year. The design is consistent with recent research showing that participation in high-quality arts programs increases children's confidence and ability to learn, while adding to their depth of knowledge in critical content areas such as social studies and history. The core objective of MC is to work collaboratively with San Francisco Bay Area public school classroom teachers and MC Teaching Artists to build an integrated arts program highlighting the African Diaspora through art and culture. To increase program impact, MC provides five professional development workshops for participating teachers with the goal of empowering Title I teachers to use community resources including arts integration to make instruction individually and culturally relevant to students.

Due to the shelter-in-place orders in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program was temporarily placed on hold in March 2020. Ongoing shelter-in-place orders in California and limited class sizes in the next school year call for the program to rapidly create and expand digital assets in order to continue to our core student population. Current plans released by the five school districts served by the program that all schools will have reduced class sizes for the remainder of the 2020-21 school year and post-2021. The proposed project will not only allow the Museum to continue serving students in the classroom, it will also allow the program to expand beyond MoAD's local geographic area through creation and delivery of high-quality digital content. Each year, the education department receives the program in areas outside of our immediate geographic area. While virtual experiences can never replace the in-person experience, digitizing the curriculum, placing instructional videos on the Museum website, and virtual 360-degree exhibition tours will substantially increase the ability for groups who currently enrolled in the MC Program to join the program and access the lesson plans and activities. Moreover, should another shelter-in-place order occur in the future, currently enrolled MC students will be able to access lesson plans and videos from the safety of their homes.

As one of the only museums in the world that exclusively celebrates the art and history of the African Diaspora, MoAD understands the importance of expanding the reach of MC beyond our local region.

**IMLS Museum Grants for African American History and Culture: Schedule of Completion**  
Museum of the African Diaspora

**YEAR 1**

Activities	2021					2022						
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Project Promotion (Continued)												
Hire All MC Teaching Artists												
Training and Group Meetings with MC Teaching Artists												
Recruit and Retain 3 Members of the Curriculum Advisory Committee												
Public Profile - Evaluation Activities												
Quarterly Meetings of the Curriculum Advisory Committee												
Hire Curriculum Writing Consultant												
Send Printed Curriculum to Designer and Printer												
Research & Write/Record Lesson Plans, Videos & Podcasts for online												
Launch Online Lesson Plans, Videos & Podcasts												
Annual Orientation with Classroom Teachers												
Workshops and Student Project with SF Public Library												
In-Class Activities with Students												
Classroom Teacher Professional Development Workshops (Monthly)												
Disseminate Educational Materials Online												
Student Art Project Creation												
Annual Student Showcases, Award Ceremonies and Family Celebrations												
Outreach to New Schools (Ongoing)												

Each PDF contains a copy of the 7 page narrative and also the schedule of completion. Many of these samples were identified by our peer reviewers as good examples of well-written applications that provided all the essential information necessary for them to review the application. Looking at these proposals might help clarify your thinking about your own.



# Application Processing and Review Timeline

Date	Review Activity
Nov 15, 2022	Applicants submit applications through Grants.gov
Dec 2022 - Feb 2023	IMLS staff review applications for completeness and eligibility
Feb - Jun 2023	Peer Review
Jul 2023	IMLS Director makes final award decisions
Aug 2023	IMLS notifies applicants of award decisions; provides reviewer comments
Sep 1, 2023	Awarded projects begin

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 email if there are any problems.

From February through June, your experienced and knowledgeable peers will provide scores and comments based on the criteria outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, and 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. 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 by email of the award decisions and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

And on September 1, 2023, funded projects begin.

# Application Tips

## Register early!

1. SAM  
Registration:  
[www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov)

2. Grants.gov  
Registration:  
[www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)



At this point, we'd like to share a few tips collected from our experience in working with applicants each year.

First on the list, is "Register early!" 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.

There is **no** cost to register on these sites, but it can take from several days to several weeks to get your registration established and validated. So pay attention to this requirement particularly if this your first time applying for a federal grant or if your SAM registration has expired or if you've have had a change in your point of contact for SAM – start that registration process as early as possible.

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.

Both SAM.gov and Grants.gov have their own help desks to assist you with resolving issues or tracking problems that might arise with your registration.





## Application Tips

- Read the application guidelines (NOFOs)
- Schedule a counseling call with one of our staff
- Describe your museum well and vividly
- Follow the narrative outline in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.
- Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.
- Ask a colleague to read the narrative with fresh eyes.
- Be sure your application is complete.
- Submit to Grants.gov early so you can correct any errors.

Here are some application tips to make sure you meet the deadline...

- Read the application guidelines (NOFOs) – we know it’s a long document, but it contains essential information on how to prepare your application components.
- Schedule a counseling call with one of our staff – we are available to answer your questions, these often come at the start of the process (general questions), and later you may have a very specific or detailed question about a particular component – you can email or call us to ask your questions.
- Describe your museum well and vividly and use recent, relevant data to make your point. – reviewers will look at the application to try to understand your museum, be sure to give them a good description.
- Follow the narrative outline in the Notice of Funding Opportunity and consider using the same headings 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 read the 7 page narrative with fresh eyes. Ask them to act like a reviewer who’s seeing this for the first time, do this well in advance of the submission deadline so you have adequate time to edit the narrative if necessary.
- Be sure your application is complete. Check it against the Table of Application Components to be sure you’re not missing any required documents.
- Submit to Grants.gov early so you can correct any errors before the deadline.

## Recommended Next Steps

Read

Read the Museums Empowered Notice of Funding Opportunity at [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov)

Check

Check your registrations on [www.SAM.gov](http://www.SAM.gov) and [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov)

Connect

Connect with us: Talk with a program staff member.

Prepare

Prepare your application. Make sure it's complete.

Submit

Submit before the deadline, November 15, 2022 (by 11:59 pm Eastern Time)

So to recap your next steps:

1. Visit [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov) and read the Notice of Funding Opportunity carefully.
2. Check your organization's registrations with both [SAM.gov](http://SAM.gov) and [Grants.gov](http://Grants.gov).
3. Connect with us: Reach out to a program staff member and schedule a counseling call.
4. Prepare your application. Make sure it's complete.
5. Submit before the deadline, November 15, 2022 (by 11:59 pm **Eastern** Time)



## IMLS Staff Contacts

Mark Isaksen  
202-653-4667  
[misaksen@imls.gov](mailto:misaksen@imls.gov)

Jeannette Thomas  
202-653-4766  
[jthomas@imls.gov](mailto:jthomas@imls.gov)

In closing our presentation today, I want to make sure you have the phone numbers and e-mail addresses for the program staff assigned to the Museums Empowered program. Don't hesitate to contact either of us with questions or concerns.