Timed Transcript for IMLS Office of Museum Services Webinar: Museums for America FY2023 Applicant Information Session

0:02

Welcome to the Institute of Museum and Library Services Webinar, Museums for America Grant Program, Fiscal Year 2023 Information Session.

0:10

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

0:19

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.

0:29

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.

0:42

The staff contact side is shown later in this webinar.

0:49

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.

0:57

Choosing a Funding Opportunity for Fiscal Year 2023 was pre-recorded, and is available as a video.

1:03

And as a PDF of the slides, plus a transcript on our website at the link identified here.

1:09

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

1:16

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

1:29

We strongly recommend that you read through this webinar to get the complete picture of preparing and submitting a competitive application to the Museums for America program.

1:38

In addition to this Museums for America webinar, we're providing pre-recorded webinars for all of our museum grant programs. You can find links to these on the grant program landing pages on our website.

1:52

Before we jump into the details, excuse me, we're often asked about number of applications and funding success rates. So, here are the figures for the just completed fiscal year 2022 Museums for America grant cycle.

2:04

As you can see, with just under $23 million available, we were able to fund over 37% of the applications we received.

2:16

In this presentation, we will be addressing the following topics: MFA program goals, characteristics of successful MFA projects, eligibility requirements for museums, important dates and times, the questions of how much and how many, project categories, allowable and unallowable costs, what you can and cannot include in your project.

2:37

Application components, Application tips, the review process, IMLS Staff Contact Information.

2:49

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.

3:00

The overall goal of the program is to support activities that strengthen the abilities of individual museums to serve their public.

3:07

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.

3:19

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

3:24

It may well be exactly the same as what the museum across town or in a neighboring state needs and that's OK.

The important thing here is that our support should help you make a local impact.

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

Well, as you prepare your application, then you should keep these characteristics in mind.

It has been our experience that an unfunded application in one that is one that has failed to deliver convincingly on one or more of these.

So it is wise to think about how to structure your application to show how your project will be strong in each.

Institutional impact.

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

In-depth knowledge.

The project design reflects a thorough understanding of current practice and knowledge about the subject matter. Project-based design.

The work plan consists of a set of logical, inter-related activities tied directly to addressing the key need or challenge, the monster ball results.

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

Let's talk about eligibility requirements for museums.

To be eligible to apply, museums must be either a unit of state or local government, or via private non-profit organizations that have tax exempt status under the Internal Revenue Code, be located in one of the 50 states of the United States of America, or affiliated Territories.

You use a professional staff, and by that, we need at least one full-time professional, or the equivalent level of effort from part-time staff, be organized on a permanent basis for its essentially educational or esthetic purposes.

Own or use tangible objects. Either animate or inanimate.

care for these objects, and exhibit these objects to the general public on a regular basis through facilities that it owns, or operates.

Please note, that our statute requires the museum to be open to the public at least 120 days a year in order to be eligible for funding.

For more details on each of these points, please take a look at the Eligibility Information in the Museums for America Notice of Funding Opportunity.

Here are important dates relating to MFA applications.

Applications must be received through grants dot gov by 11 59 PM Eastern Time on November 15, 2022.

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.

We will say this over and over again, but start early and submit your application early.

6:07

That way, if you encounter difficulty of any kind when submitting your proposal, you'll have some time to resolve the problem and resubmit.

6:15

MFA awards will be announced in August 2023.

6:18

An MFA projects must be scheduled to start on the first day of September, 2023.

6:24

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

6:31

Regarding how much money he may request, there was only one option in MFA.

6:36

All requests must be between $5,000 and $250,000, including both direct and indirect costs.

6:43

If you asked for less than $5,000 or more than $250,000, your application will most likely be rejected and not reviewed.

6:51

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

6:57

Cost share can take a number of forms among them are cash, staff, time, volunteer time, third party contributions, grants from foundations, and support from state or local government.

7:08

Cost share cannot come from other federal sources.

7:11

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 2023 funding announcement for Museums for America.

7:21

However, as you consider the option to submit more than one application, we urge you to think more about the capacity of your organization to manage multiple federal awards at once.

7:34

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

7:40

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

7:49

They go on further to explain that a project is temporary, because it has a defined beginning and ending time, and therefore defined scope and resources.

7:57

The project is unique in that it is not a routine operation, but rather a specific set of operations designed to accomplish a singular goal.

8:05

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

8:10

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, which are designed to accomplish a specific, singular goal.

8:26

With the concept of project in mind, let's turn to project categories.

8:30

Second, to choosing to apply to the Museum for America Grant Program, this is likely to be the most important decision you make about your funding application.

8:38

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

8:46

You will find these three areas described under the goals of the MFA program and the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

8:52

You will select your Project Category on the Museum Program Information form.

8:58

So, why is your decision about which project category or to choose so important?

9:03

For one thing, your application will be reviewed by museum professionals who have experience and expertise in these general categories.

9:10

And, for another, your application will be competing against others who have chosen the same category.

9:15

In short, the entire review process incorporates an assumption that your project aligns with the category you've identified.

9:22

So, it's an important choice.

9:27

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

9:33

In this, and the two slides that follow the objectives provide a list of the types of projects that fit within the goal, the goal's correspond to the MFA program categories.

9:43

A project in Lifelong Learning might include, but it's 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, professional development opportunities for museum staff, or program evaluation.

10:03

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

10:11

Spend time really thinking through who your learners in this project are, and what their needs are.

10:16

It's not likely going to be for everybody.

10:19

So, who is it really?

10:21

What do they want to learn?

10:23

What do you want them to learn? And what's the best way to achieve that goal?

10:27

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.

10:38

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

10:47

As you scan this list, you will see the word community in nearly every entry.

10:52

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

10:57

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.

11:07

So if your project involves exhibitions or interpretive programs, how do you know if your project fits best within Lifelong Learning or Community Engagement?

11:15

Which categories should you pick?

11:17

We suggest that you consider whether or not your intended exhibitions or interpretive programs require the input of community partners to co-create the content or if your museum's curatorial staff will drive the content internally.

11:30

If it is the former, Community Engagement is probably the best category to select.

11:35

And if it is the latter, Lifelong Learning would be the appropriate one to select.

11:39

Both approaches are legitimate and both are fundable.

11:42

Ultimately, it's your choice.

11:43

What's important is that you choose one and read your application that way.

11:50

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 to acquire them.

12:00

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

12:05

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

12:14

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

12:22

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

12:33

We also support conservation projects of all kinds, general, detailed, and environmental surveys, as well as treatments and environmental improvements.

12:41

And you are welcome to incorporate aspects of training and or collections management into these projects, if doing so. It makes sense for your institution.

12:49

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

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

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

Sometimes it's tough to choose, and you might be tempted to think that the best strategy would be to align with more than one, two, or maybe even three.

We advise against that for several reasons.

The project categories have different goals, and we expect the projects aligned with each will address different problems, use different approaches, and we'll measure success and achieving the intended results in different ways.

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

Here are three things we suggest you try.

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.

Experience a change in attitude about the subject of your exhibit, 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 require engaging a number of community members, and are you doing it because you believe your museum can make a difference?

Or is your project about the collections?

14:19

Will your project result in a better managed, better care for and more accessible set of objects?

14:26

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

14:31

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 and museum environments.

14:43

Would you rather be we put it in front of a combination of experts in civic engagement and social justice, community outreach, and collective impact?

14:52

If that sounds right, then it may push you towards Community Engagement.

14:56

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.

15:03

Curators, conservators, or collections information specialists. If that seems appropriate, appropriate, then this is most likely your best choice.

15:12

Our most important advice is to choose one project category.

15:16

Read the instructions for preparing an application as well as the review criteria for that category and write your proposal accordingly.

15:23

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

15:31

We'll turn now to types of allowable and unallowable costs for your project.

15:35

Be careful when preparing your proposal to only include allowable costs and your Federal funding request, and any thoughts share you choose to provide, including unallowable costs can hurt your chances of getting positive reviews and being recommended for funding.

15:48

We'll go through some common expenses that are allowable and unallowable, but for details you'll want to consult the Federal regulations that govern federal awards.

15:57

We call these 2 CFR 200 for short, but the full title is Title 2, Subtitle A, Chapter two, part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements: Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

16:10

I know that sounds like a mouthful, but these regulations contain important guidance that all federal grant applicants and recipients should be aware of.

16:18

Fortunately, they're available online in a searchable format via the US. Government Publishing Office, website listed on this screen.

16:25

Of particular interest for this topic of allowable and unallowable costs is Subpart E, Cost principles, a small section of which is shown on the right side of this slide.

16:38

In the MFA, notice the funding opportunity on page 17.

16:42

We provide a partial list of the most common examples of allowable costs, as listed here.

16:46

These costs may be a part of what you ask us to pay for with federal funds, or what you will pay us for as part of your cost share.

16:53

Again, the rules about allowability apply to both.

16:57

When completing your project budget, be sure to check that all the costs include whether grant funds or cost share are allowable.

17:04

You are required to explain all those expenses in your Application Budget Justification.

17:12

On Pages 17 to 18 of the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity, we also provide a list of generally unallowable costs, again, both for IMLS funds and for cost share.

17:21

These costs may not be part of what you asked 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 any proposal.

17:33

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.

17:43

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

17:51

Next up, our 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.

18:02

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

18:07

The first is that of required documents.

18:09

All applications must include the documents listed here, omission of even just one might result in your applications rejection.

18:16

Also, important to note, are page limits. If you exceed the page limits specified in the Notice of Funding Opportunity, we must remove the extra before your application goes out for review.

18:26

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

18:35

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

18:45

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

18:54

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

18:59

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.

19:07

If you are applying as a non-profit, then, you must include your proof of non-profit status issued by the Internal Revenue Service. We will not accept the letter of state sales tax exemption as proof of non-profit status.

19:19

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

19:26

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

19:33

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

19:42

Just like the required documents, omission of even one might result in your applications rejection.

19:47

Please note that the term digital product includes digitized and born digital content. Resources are assets and software.

19:55

If you are creating any of these types of materials, you must include the form with your application.

20:02

The third group of application components is Supporting Documents.

20:06

Here is a partial list of examples.

Supporting documents are optional.

You may choose some or none.

We urge you to make good decisions here and include those that will supplement your proposal.

This is not a place to introduce brand new information. Rather as the name suggests, they should lend support to your project justification, work plan and intended results that you've already spelled out in your application narrative.

For example, have you identified a partner whose involvement is key to the project's success?

If so, a letter of support or commitment would go a long way to re-assuring viewer reviewers.

They are on board, and the project will succeed.

Pictures can help give reviewers who may not be familiar with your institution, programs, collections, or community, a better idea of what you're describing within your narrative.

Vendor quotes or equipment specifications show you've done some of the legwork in getting appropriate estimates for project costs.

We recommend that you be respectful of your reviewer's time and avoid any temptation to include hundreds of pages of extraneous material that is not directly relevant to your project.

Being judicious really does work for your benefit.

Supporting documents can make or break an application, include what is important and helpful, and stop there.

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

First, is a strategic plan summary.

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.

We asked, for a summary of your plan, no more than two pages, so that reviewers will be able to understand how your proposed projects activities, will further your institutional goals and objectives, to verify its legitimacy, we ask that you indicate when and by whom the plan was approved.

For some institutions, this might be the Board of Trustees. For others, it might be someone, or a group representing authority, or a division, or department.

Use a narrative format for your strategic plan summary.

Although infographics and cleverly designed imagery might be just a 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 will find a well-constructed, thoughtful, written summary, the best way to confirm connections to your project.

Make it easy for them to see them.

The federal government recently added a new requirement for all federal awards. Agencies are now required to measure the performance of awardees.

The 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 us understand, manage, and improve our grant programs, and the assistance we provide to applicants and awardees.

And it helps us inform internal stakeholders, IMLS leadership, key staff and programs, grants management, and finance, and external stakeholders, legislative and oversight committees, media, and the public about our grantmaking.

Project Evaluation, by contrast, is all about your project, intended results or outcomes.

The prompts that help you write your narrative, which we will talk about in a moment, will guide you through a discussion of your evaluation methods. We ask what you need, your needs 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 audiences will change as a result of your project.

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

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, and efficiency.

24:20

Well resources, such as phones, expertise, and time, are used, and costs are minimized while generating maximum value for the target group.

24:29

How well the activities meet the requirements and expectations of the target group, also known as quality, timeliness the extent to which each task activity is completed within the proposed timeframe.

24:42

Across the top, are the information points we're asking you to use in your statements with examples for each.

24:47

For instance, with data we will collect are listed counts, cost, weights, volumes, temperatures, percentages, and ours, as well as qualitative observations, opinions, and feelings.

25:00

For each performance measure, we provide a couple of examples addressing issues that might turn off in library museum projects.

25:06

Our intent wants to make it easy for applicants to see the relationship between this request and the project they are proposing.

25:12

The blank spaces where we suggest applicants write their own performance measure statements, and the chart is constructed such that I can expand to allow as much space as needed.

25:21

We're looking for one statement for each required performance measure. You may provide more than one statement per measure if you wish.

25:27

We do limit the performance measurement plan to two pages.

25:34

Now, let's talk about the narrative of your proposal. You have seven pages to cover three very important issues, and the Notice of Funding Opportunity provides lengthy guidance on what the narrative should cover.

25:45

First is the Project Justification.

25:48

What need problem or challenge will your project address, and how is it identified?

25:53

Describe how you abuse demographic information, economic circumstances, condition assessments, and other relevant data from reliable sources to define the need, problem or challenge, and develop the scope for the project.

26:05

Who is the target group for your project? And how have they been involved in the planning?

26:09

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.

26:22

Who are the ultimate beneficiaries for this project?

26:25

Beneficiaries refers to those who are likely to be aided in the long term by your project.

26:30

They may or may not be the same as your target group.

26:33

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.

26:48

In section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, under Review Criteria, you will find a list of questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal.

26:57

It is a good idea to refer to these as you craft your narrative to, be certain that you are providing reviewers, clear, solid information.

27:04

You will see that they correspond fairly directly with the prompts you are given to write your narrative.

27:12

one of the prompts and the project justification section of the narrative is the identification of the need problem or challenge your project addresses.

It is foundational in your application, so 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, or attitude?

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

Will collections the better care for? Will their lifespan be extended?

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

Identify why it is important that this particular change happens.

Hone your problem definition carefully in clear and succinct terms.

Gather and present data that support your problem definition.

If the project justification section was the why, the project work plan section is where you identify the who, what, when, and how, who will do what activities when, and using what resources.

You should explain how you will track your progress toward achieving your intended results, and what you'll do if you need to correct course.

We also ask you to think about risks that are inherent in your particular project.

Tell us how you've taken that into account in your planning.

I'll say more about that in a few minutes.

Again, this is a list of questions in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity that reviewers are asked to consider when they review your proposal, So, make sure your Narrative is answering these effectively.

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, An activity is not a goal, a result, or an outcome, rather it is something that you do as part of striving to achieve those, Aim for a reasonable level of granularity in identifying your activities.

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?

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.

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.

29:56

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

30:03

Here are some examples of risks that might be part of a project for which you might seek MFA funding.

30:09

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

30:15

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

30:20

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

30:27

What will happen if one or more intern drops out?

30:29

What's the plan for replacing them mid-project?

30:33

A project involving rehousing collections into new museum-quality collections storage furniture might run into delays in preparing the space, or in the delivery of the cabinets.

30:42

What happens to the collection items then?

30:45

How will the institution ensure that they remain safe and secure?

30:50

A project depends on your community partners to achieve success, but one partner drops out mid-project.

30:55

What do you do now?

31:01

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

This section 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 directly, and it will be diminished or eliminated altogether.

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

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.

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

Again, here's the list of review questions that reviewers are asked to consider when they read and score the project Results section of your narrative.

These are found in Section E of the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

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.

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.

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.

32:30

If you said someone will learn something.

32:33

How will you know if your problem relates to related to segments of your community being better able to work together?

32:39

How will you know when that has been achieved?

32:41

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

32:46

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

32:51

This focus on results and measuring success in meaningful ways is not new.

32:55

There has been a tremendous amount of work done on ways to measure success.

32:59

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.

33:09

Many MFA applicants use logic models, and reviewers appreciate their conciseness and focus.

33:14

There are many excellent resources available to help you construct a logic model.

33:18

And among these are IMLS's Shaping Outcomes, a free online course developed in partnership with Indiana University, Purdue University of Indianapolis.

33:28

It is available at WWW dot shaping outcomes dot org, and it is customized to meet the needs of museum applicants.

33:37

There are downloadable worksheets and numerous examples that you are likely to find relevant to your own work.

33:45

So, to recap, Your Narrative has three sections: Project Justification, Project Work Plan, and Project Results, if you have seven pages for it, the sections are all equally important.

33:56

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

34:02

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

34:10

At this point, I'd like to share a few tips based on our experiences with the MFA Application submission process each year.

34:17

First off, you must submit your application online through grants dot gov.

34:21

IMLS does not accept applications by mail or e-mail.

34:26

In order to register with grants dot gov, you must have an active sam dot gov registration and unique entity identifier number.

34:34

So make sure your registrations for both of these sites are complete, Your accounts are active, and that any necessary passwords are current.

34:42

These registrations expire periodically, so do not wait until it's time to hit the Submit button to check on them.

34:48

You should coordinate with any other staff members, such as your authorized organization representative, who may hold the accounts and passwords you'll need to submit.

34:58

Both the sam dot gov and grants dot gov websites have robust help features and FAQs.

35:04

If you run into technical issues with either of these sites, you should reach out to their helpdesk and request a tracking case or ticket number in order to document your issue and attempts at resolving it.

35:15

Failure to have active sam dot gov or grants dot gov registrations by the application deadline is not an excuse for submitting a late application.

35:23

So, again, start early.

35:30

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

35:42

So, here are some tips to help you do, just that.

35:45

start early.

35:46

You've already done that by participating in this webinar.

35:50

Become familiar with grants dot gov Workspace.

35:52

It has many good features, including upfront validation, which allows you to connect to correct errors prior to submission, and the opportunity to collaborate with others in creating your application.

36:04

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

36:09

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.

36:16

Revisit the MFA Notice of Funding Opportunity frequently and follow the narrative outline It provides.

36:22

use headings, subheadings, or numbered sections in your narrative to make it easy for reviewers to read.

36:29

Avoid generalities, acronyms, and jargon.

36:32

The people who will review your application are experts, but they may not be totally familiar with your particular fields shorthand.

36:38

Make it easy for them to understand what you mean.

36:41

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

36:46

An advantage to starting your application early is that you can ask a colleague to review everything with fresh eyes before you submit.

36:52

Ask them to act like a reviewer who's seen this for the first time.

36:56

Be sure your application is complete.

36:58

Check it against the table of application components and the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

37:03

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

37:13

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

37:18

IMLS staff will review it for completeness and eligibility. And you will hear from us by e-mail if there are any problems.

37:25

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.

37:34

An IMLS staff will examine your budget, your financials, and your track record with past and current grants.

37:41

We then prepare materials for the IMLS Deputy Director for museums and the IMLS director.

37:47

By law, the IMLS director is charged with the authority and responsibility to make final award decisions. And this happens in July.

37:55

In August, we will notify you by e-mail of the award decisions, and provide the scores and comments created by the reviewers.

38:02

On September 1, 2023 funded projects begin.

38:09

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

38:16

Here is a listing of the names, e-mail addresses, and direct phone numbers, program staff, and the Office of Museum Services who are answering questions about Museums for America.

38:24

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.

38:33

We'll be very happy to help.

38:35

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