

Funding Opportunities for Latino Museums

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Highlights

Top sources of grant funding for Latino-serving museums and cultural institutions include **philanthropic foundations (71 percent), individual donors (57 percent), and local or state governments (54 percent)**, according to Urban's survey of 74 institutions.

This is one of a series of products from Urban's research to inform development of the new **American Latino History and Culture program** to be administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This grantmaking program aims to strengthen the capacity of American Latino museums at promoting and preserving the study of Latino life, art, history, and culture. For more, see <https://www.urban.org/projects/planning-american-latino-history-and-culture-program>.

Note: We use the term "Latino" throughout to remain consistent with legislation authorizing this new program (Public Law 116-260), and intend for it to reference all diverse people of Spanish, Latin American, and/or Caribbean origin in the US.

The funding landscape for culturally specific museums, including those focused on Latino art, history, and culture, has historically been challenging to navigate. Available opportunities are more easily known to and accessed by mainstream institutions, which often have more resources and staff capacity with which to apply, as well as more established connections to philanthropic foundations and private donors.

In recent years, government agencies and foundations have made concerted efforts to reduce these structural inequities by increasing funding opportunities for Latino museums (Ramos 2023). This changing narrative is exciting but depends on spreading awareness among eligible applicants and ensuring accessibility in the application process. For long-term impact, it also depends on proactive coordination between public and private funders to ensure Latino museums have the infrastructure to receive and invest larger awards (Helicon Collaborative 2017).

To support these goals, in this summary we explore the following:

- potential funding opportunities for Latino museums
- tips on accessing these opportunities
- ideas for equitable capacity building

We draw on 2023 field research conducted by Urban to inform the development of the American Latino History and Culture (ALHC) program to be administered by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). That research included searches of public databases and websites, as well as interviews, listening sessions, and a survey with Latino museum professionals (Treskon et al. 2023a, 2023b).

POTENTIAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR LATINO MUSEUMS

Tables 1 and 2 list public and private funders, respectively, that currently fund or recently funded Latino museums. These lists include federal government agencies, state and local government agencies, philanthropic foundations, and other types of funders. Each organization is hyperlinked to its webpage or funding opportunities.

These lists are not exhaustive but represent all organizations we found in our 2023 research. They exclude high-net-worth individuals who have provided gifts to Latino museums. These tables are intended to increase awareness among Latino museum professionals about the diversity of potential funders and opportunities available to them. While several of

these funders are geographically focused, similar types of organizations and agencies exist in other locales across the United States.

TABLE 1
Public Funding Opportunities for Latino Museums

Federal government	State and local government
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Institute of Museum and Library Services: Inspire! Grants for Small Museums, Museums for America, National Leadership Grants, Museum Grants for African American History and Culture, American Latino Museum Internship and Fellowship Initiative, American Latino History and Culture program (forthcoming) ▪ National Archives and Records Administration ▪ National Endowment for the Arts: Challenge America, Our Town, Grants for Arts Projects ▪ National Endowment for the Humanities: Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions, Cultural and Community Resilience, Digital Humanities Advancement, Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants ▪ National Historical Publications and Records Commissions: NHPRC-Mellon Planning Grants ▪ National Park Service: Save America's Treasures Collection Grants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ American Council of Learned Societies ▪ Arizona Commission on the Arts (Arizona focus) ▪ California Arts Council (California focus) ▪ Connecting Communities Digital Initiative (CCDI) Grant for Libraries, Archives, Museums ▪ Council on Library and Information Resources ▪ Florida Humanities (Florida focus) ▪ Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs (Florida focus) ▪ See also the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies database (searchable directory of state arts agencies)

Source: Urban's 2023 field research on Latino museums, including interviews and listening sessions with representatives of Latino museums; searches of grant data reported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities; and additional online searching for other grant funding for Latino museums (see Treskon et al. 2023b).

TABLE 2
Private Funding Opportunities for Latino Museums

Philanthropic foundations	Other funders
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Art Bridges Foundation ▪ Bonfils Stanton Foundation (Colorado focus) ▪ Carnegie Corporation of New York ▪ Flamboyant Arts Fund (Puerto Rico focus) ▪ Ford Foundation ▪ Foundation for Advancement in Conservation ▪ Getty Foundation ▪ Henry Luce Foundation ▪ Hillman Foundation (Pennsylvania focus) ▪ Houston Endowment (Texas focus) ▪ Jeffris Family Foundation ▪ John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation ▪ Knight Foundation ▪ Kress Foundation ▪ LOR Foundation ▪ Terra Foundation for American Art ▪ The Al Larvick Conservation Fund ▪ The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation ▪ The Hearst Foundation ▪ The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Archaeological Institute of America ▪ Bank of America Art Conservation Project ▪ BIPOC Arts and Network Fund (Texas focus) ▪ Californians for the Arts (California focus) ▪ Costume Society of America - Small Museum Collection Care Grant ▪ National Association of Latino Arts and Cultures: NALAC Fund for the Arts ▪ National Fund for Sacred Places ▪ National Trust for Historic Preservation

Source: Urban's 2023 field research on Latino museums, including interviews and listening sessions with representatives of Latino museums; searches of grant data reported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities; and additional online searching for other grant funding for Latino museums (see Treskon et al. 2023b).

TIPS FOR ACCESSING AND INCREASING ACCESSIBILITY OF OPPORTUNITIES

Larger museums with development staff or the capacity to hire grant writers are better equipped to find and pursue open funding opportunities. For other Latino museums—most of which are smaller and newer to the field (Treskon et al. 2023a)—we offer tips on accessing these opportunities. We also include tips for funders on making their opportunities more accessible to Latino museums, based on what we learned from the field.

Tips for Latino museums seeking funding include the following:

- Set aside a day to **gather information about potential funders and opportunities** that align with your museum’s goals. Think creatively; learn from tables 1 and 2 as well as your museum colleagues. Consider signing up for a free or low-cost “grant watch” service to learn about new opportunities as they are released.
- **Review descriptions of projects** Latino museums and other culturally specific museums have gotten funded. Many funders offer lists or searchable databases of what they have funded. Past projects can inspire ideas, demonstrate viability for funding, and may align with areas your museum intends to pursue.
- **Connect with recipients of funding** as potential partners or sources of knowledge on the application process. Consider collaborations with more experienced partners, including Latino museum consultants and larger Latino museums that could be mentors. You may also seek funding in collaboration with one or more smaller community organizations, cultural centers, or schools.
- **Seek technical assistance from funders** directly. Email funders using the contact information they provide and inquire about the appropriateness of your ideas. Many are open to conversations about your ideas and some can share copies of previously successful proposals. Funders also often offer webinars, workshops, or individualized technical assistance that you could learn about and use.
- **Develop and maintain a three-page writeup** that describes your organization, its history and development, and your current goals, vision, and capacity for growth. Pull from this writeup in all your applications. You may also maintain a list of previously funded projects, programs, exhibits, and other works to demonstrate your organization’s operational and financial management capabilities.

Tips for organizations seeking to fund Latino museums include the following:

- **Be creative, intentional, and equitable in your outreach** to spread awareness of funding opportunities to Latino communities and museum associations. Encourage applications from diverse organizations, which may involve ensuring your organization is viewed as accessible by customizing technical assistance to match applicant needs, offering Spanish- and Portuguese-language materials, and connecting in person at local conferences.
- **Reduce unnecessary application requirements** wherever feasible and offer recorded workshops to make programs accessible to new applicants. Consider that smaller and newer applicants may need basic introductory webinars about the application process and grant requirements.
- **Ensure the communities of focus are represented** in review panels. For culturally specific Latino museums, first-voice relevance and long-standing connections to local Latino communities can be very important.

ADVANCING EQUITABLE CAPACITY BUILDING

Several of the recommendations made in our final report involve the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) advancing equitable capacity building among American Latino museums (Treskon et al. 2023a). Briefly, those recommendations are as follows:

- Ensure Latino museums can easily search for federal opportunities.
- Offer strategic planning or seed funding to support the capacity-building needs of smaller Latino museums.

- Increase outreach to help Latino museums identify IMLS and the ALHC program as a key opportunity.
- Offer robust technical assistance and permit flexibility on grant cost matching to support smaller museums.

Building upon these, Helicon Collaborative’s (2017) work shows that effective equity building depends on intentional and proactive coordination among public and private funders. Increasing funding opportunities for smaller Latino museums is a strong start, but it is equally important to support infrastructure and capacity building that enables these institutions to utilize funds effectively. For some communities, this may involve increased coordination between state arts agencies and federal government funders, such as IMLS, the National Endowment for the Arts, and/or the National Endowment for the Humanities (Helicon Collaborative 2017; Treskon et al. 2023a).

It is critical that funders recognize the need for operational and strategic planning support while offering programmatic funding. Given the long-standing and systemic funding inequities, many museums are simply trying to keep their lights on and doors open. They may need to invest in organizational infrastructure before or simultaneous to developing collections and advancing programs.

Regardless of these challenges, Latino museums and communities have made significant accomplishments in art, history, and culture that we are excited to watch grow in the next 20 years as they have since 2000.

REFERENCES

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