INSTITUTE of **Museum** and **Library** SERVICES

Getting Started with IMLS Museum Grants

Office of Museum Services

Introduction

Video Chapters

1. **Chapter 1:** What is IMLS?

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3. **Chapter 3:** Which Grant Program Should I Apply to?

4. **Chapter 4:** How Do I Apply?

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Using This Video

Watch

Watch this video in its entirety

Review

Review the Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) at www.imls.gov/grants

Refer

Refer to this video as needed

Chapter 1:
What is IMLS?

MISSION: The mission of IMLS is to advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development.

Office of Museum Services

- Awards discretionary grants to a broad range of institutions in the museum field

- Eight grant programs accepting applications

Chapter 2:
Is My Institution Eligible for an IMLS Museum Grant?
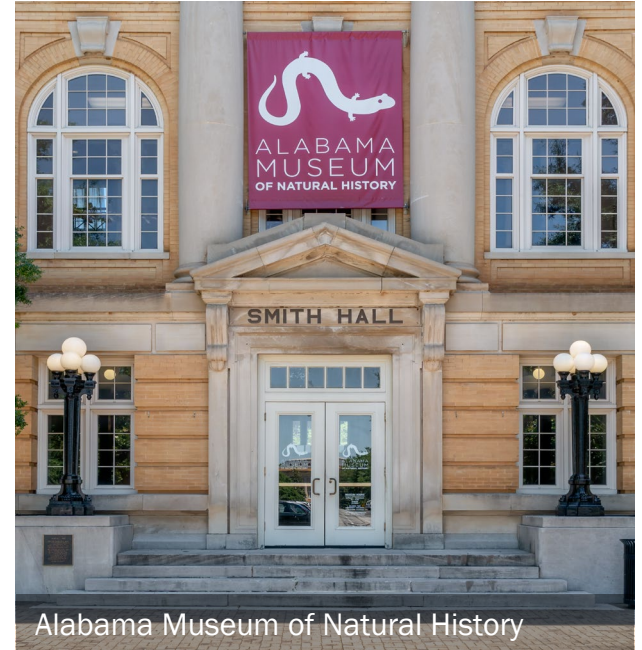
Applicant Requirements

- Requirements for all potential applicants:

  - Your organization must be located in one of the United States' 50 States, its territories, or the District of Columbia

  - Your organization must be a unit of state, local, or Tribal government, or a private nonprofit organization with tax-exempt status

Program Eligibility

- Only museums may apply to
  - Museums for America
  - Museums Empowered
  - Inspire Grants for Small Museums

Alabama Museum of Natural History

Museum Requirements

- Museums must

  - ✓ Have at least one full time or equivalent professional staff person, either paid or unpaid

  - ✓ Have a physical location that it owns or operates

  - ✓ Have been open to the public for at least 120 days in the year prior to the application deadline

  - ✓ Own or use tangible objects

- Museums may be stand-alone organizations, or they may be part of a larger institution, such as a college, university, Tribe, or a state or local government.

Examples of Museums

- Anthropology museums
- Aquariums
- Arboretums
- Art museums
- Botanical gardens
- Children's/youth museums
- General museums
- Historic houses/sites

- History museums
- Natural history museums
- Nature centers
- Planetariums
- Science/technology centers
- Specialized museums
- Zoological parks

Program Eligibility

- Programs with unique eligibility requirements
  - 21st Century Museum Professionals
  - National Leadership Grants for Museums
  - Museum Grants for African American History and Culture
  - Museum Grants for American Latino History and Culture
  - Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

Allowable Costs

- Salaries, wages, and fringe benefits

- Travel expenses

- Materials and supplies

- Third-party costs

- Publication design and printing

- Program evaluation

- Staff and volunteer training

- Internships and fellowships

- Equipment to improve collections storage

- Program-specific overhead costs

Unallowable Costs

- General fundraising costs

- Contributions to endowments

- General operating support

- Acquisition of collections

- Construction or renovation of facilities

- Social activities, receptions, or entertainment

Chapter 3:
Which Grant Program Should I Apply To?

Available Programs

- Museums for America

- Museums Empowered

- Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

- National Leadership Grants for Museums

- 21st Century Museum Professionals

- Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

- Museum Grants for American Latino History and Culture

- Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

Museums for America

The Denver Botanic Gardens

Goal: To strengthen the ability of an individual museum to serve its public through a project that is aligned with its current strategic plan

Objectives: Lifelong Learning, Community Engagement, and Collections Stewardship and Access

Duration: 1 – 3 years

Funding: $5,000 - $300,000 (1:1 Cost Share)

Museums Empowered

Science Museum of Minnesota

Goal: To support projects that use professional development and training to generate change and growth within museums of all types and sizes
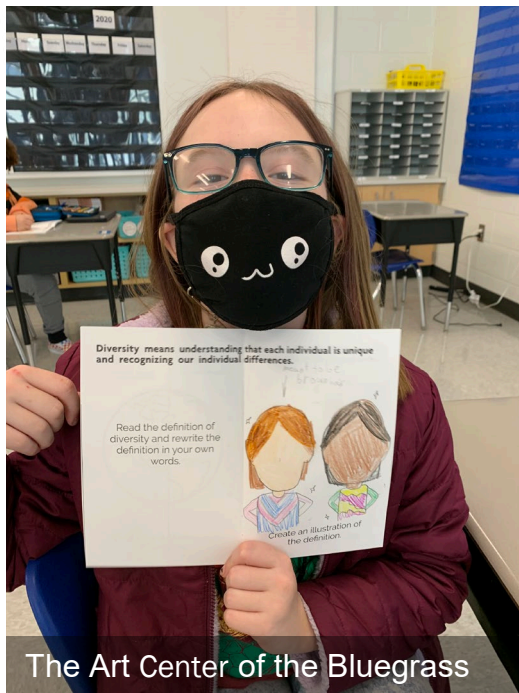
Objectives: Digital Technology; Evaluation; Organizational Management

Duration: 1 – 3 years

Funding: $5,000 - $300,000

Cost Share: 1:1

Inspire! Grants for Small Museums

The Art Center of the Bluegrass

Goal: To support small museums in addressing priorities identified in their strategic plans

Objectives: Lifelong Learning; Collections Stewardship and Access

Duration: 1 – 3 years

	Small Projects	Large Projects
Funding	$5,000-$25,000	$25,001 - $75,000
Cost Share	None	1:1

National Leadership Grants for Museums

The Broad

Goal: To address critical needs of the museum field and to advance museum practice

Project Types: Research, Non-research

Duration: 1 – 3 years

	Non-Research	Research
Funding	$50,000 - $750,000	$50,000 - $750,000
Cost Share	1:1	None

21st Century Museum Professionals (21MP)

Goal: To build career pathways, strengthen professional networks, and identify and share effective workforce education and training practices in the museum field.

Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts

Duration: 1 – 3 years

Funding: $100,000 – $500,000

Cost Share: 1:1

Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Amistad Research Center

Goal: To build the capacity of African American museums and support the growth and development of museum professionals at African American museums and HBCUs

Duration: 1 – 3 years

	Small Projects	Large Projects
Funding	$5,000 - $100,000	$100,001 - $500,000
Cost Share	None	1:1

Museum Grants for American Latino History and Culture

Mexic-Arte Museum

Goal: To build the capacity of American Latino history and culture museums to serve their communities and advance the growth and development of a professional workforce in American Latino cultural institutions

Duration: 1 – 3 years

Funding: $5,000 - $500,000

Cost Share: None

Native American/Native Hawaiian Museum Services Program

Goal: To enhance museum services that sustain heritage, culture, and knowledge among Indian Tribes and Native-Hawaiian serving organizations

Duration: 1 – 3 years
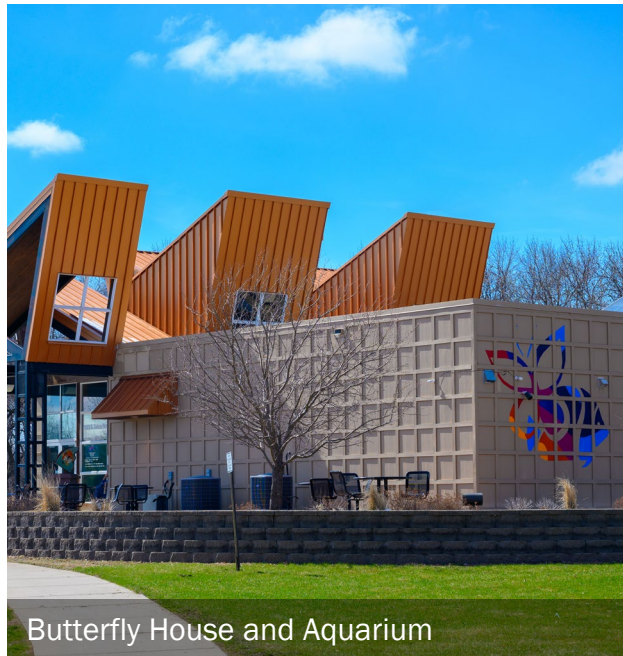
Funding: $5,000 – $250,000

Cost Share: None

Eligibility: Federally recognized Tribes & organizations that primarily serve & represent Native Hawaiians

Hi'ipaka LLC

Additional Information

- You can apply to multiple programs, but must meet the eligibility requirements for each program

- Full details are available at www.imls.gov/grants

Butterfly House and Aquarium

Chapter 4:
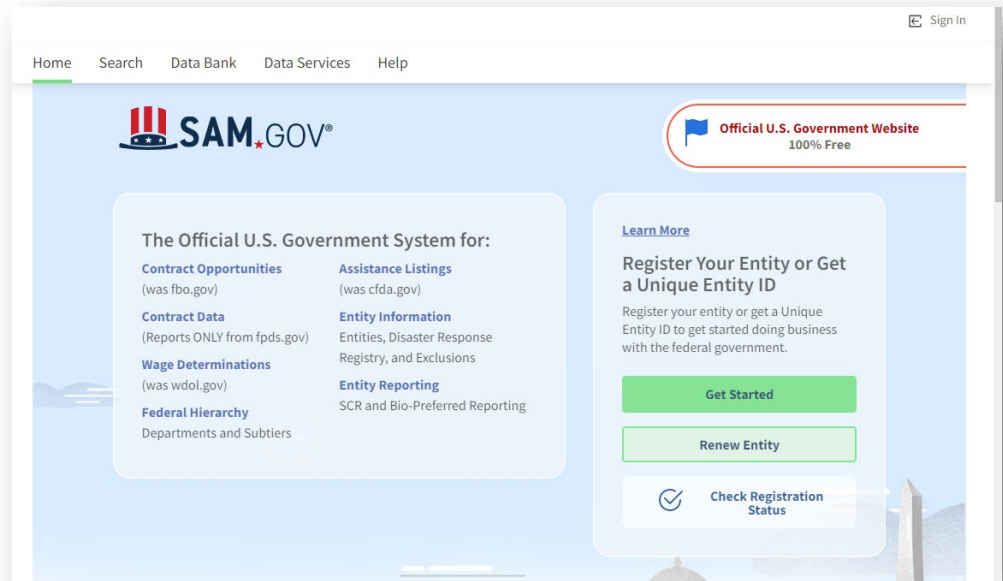## How Do I Apply?

Key Dates

March 13, 2026
Application Deadline
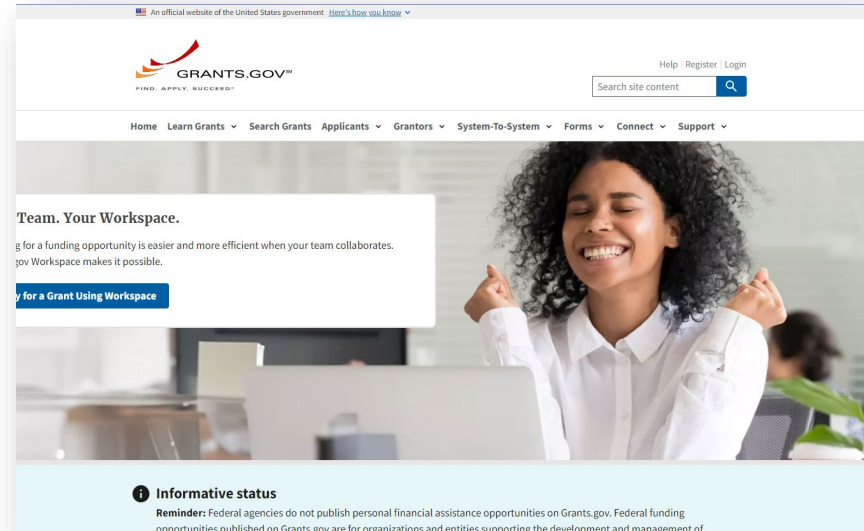
Sept. 1, 2026
Projects Start

SAM.gov

- Create or update Sam.gov account immediately

- Register with the bank account that should receive grant funds

- For further assistance: call the Federal Service Desk at 866-606-8220, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET.

Grants.gov

- Use your Unique Entity Identifier to register with Grants.gov

- Register with the bank account that should receive grant funds.

- If you need further assistance, visit www.grants.gov/support, email support@grants.gov, or call 800-518-4726; available 24/7 except on federal holidays.

Chapter 5:

What if I Have More Questions?

IMLS.gov

- Strategic Plan

- NOFOs for all grant programs

- Contact information of IMLS staff

National Veterans Art Museum

One-on-One Counseling

- Short sessions with our program officers

- Request a session through any of the program landing pages at www.imls.gov/grants

Mystic Seaport Museum

Conclusion

Reminders

- Review www.imls.gov/grants for details on specific grant programs

- Register with SAM.gov, then Grants.gov, as soon as possible

- All applications are due by 11:59 pm U.S. Eastern Time on March 13th, 2026

Thank you and good luck!

Credit

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