



## Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

Sample Application MH-00-18-0039-18  
“The Viability and Visibility Project”

**Legacy Museum, Tuskegee University  
Tuskegee, AL**

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$24,022
Amount of cost share:	\$0

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing applications for the FY2019 Museums for America grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2018 applications. Be sure to use the instructions in the FY2019 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

## **Abstract**

Tuskegee University's Legacy Museum seeks funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services for the non-matching award of \$24,022 to rehouse collections for museum storage. The *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* is part of the museum's original Organization Concept Plan document, which mapped out the museum's first decade of existence. For the Legacy Museum, which opened in 2009, the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* marks and affirms the ninth-year milestone. The goal of the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* is to improve collection stewardship in two interconnected ways: 1.) By acknowledging the museum's viability through collection management, 2.) By focusing on visibility through conservation and preservation of museum collections.

In 2009, when the Legacy Museum first opened, Dr. Jontyle Robinson, newly-appointed curator, was tasked with the organization of the museum and conservation of the collections. Dr. Robinson addressed her obligations to the museum strategic and professional ways by having the entire collection appraised by Jean Belt and finding an expert conservation analyst to conduct a collections storage and environmental assessment. On March 25, 2015 David Ryan, expert conservator of Ryan Fine Art Service, completed the collections storage and environmental assessment report. In the assessment report, Ryan addressed three immediate goals, arranged from highest to lowest priority. Identified in Mr. Ryan's report: 1.) Get collections off the storage floor, 2.) Mount shelves for dioramas that will increase storage capacity, 3.) Install an art rack system to store paintings and art. The *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* was created with David Ryan's three immediate goals in mind. So the Legacy Museum's staff and volunteers have implemented these three priorities in their daily procedures.

The Legacy Museum has addressed the highest priority of the three recommendations: getting the collections off the storage floor. As a result, we discovered that all three priorities are interconnected. In other words, we are not able to address the highest priority of getting collections off the storage floor without addressing the 20 dioramas and scores of paintings that need to be properly stored. Addressing the dioramas and paintings will create more storage space to tackle the highest priority of getting collections off of the storage floor onto appropriate shelving.

The *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* is designed to last one year, from September 1, 2018 to August 31, 2019. Should we be funded, activities will include assessing collections, rehousing artworks, applying shelving for dioramas and incorporating an art rack system for paintings and drawings, utilizing students interested in art conservation to assist with assessment of artwork and equipment installation, consulting with David Ryan regarding improvements, and returning documents to the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

The intended result will improve collections stewardship, promote environmental management of storage, and increase institutional control over managing irreplaceable resources.

## Narrative

### **Project Justification**

Tuskegee University's Legacy Museum seeks funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services for the non-matching award of \$24,022 to rehouse collections for museum storage. The *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* is part of the museum's original Organization Concept Plan document, which mapped out the museum's first decade of existence. For the Legacy Museum, which opened in 2009, the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* marks and affirms the ninth-year milestone. The goal of the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* is to improve collection stewardship in two interconnected ways: 1.) By acknowledging the museum's viability through collection management, 2.) By focusing on visibility through conservation and preservation of museum collections.

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The intended result will be to improve collections stewardship, environmental management of storage, and increase institutional control over managing irreplaceable resources. The improvements that will be made under the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* will create a functional storage space, which will ultimately increase the production of collection management. In addition, the Legacy Museum will increase the accuracy of cataloging the collections. Overall, the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* will

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<sup>1</sup> David Ryan, Museum Collections Storage and Environmental Assessment, pg. 2. (*Supportingdoc1*).

improve daily operations of the museum, which coincides with the goals of Museum Grants for African American History and Culture.

The goals of the African American History and Culture program are to support projects that improve the operations, care of collections, and development of professional management at African American museums. The Legacy Museum at Tuskegee University exemplifies an African American museum at a historically black university that is determined to improve the operations and collection management of the museum. In addition, The Legacy Museum, under Dr. Jontyle Robinson, spearheaded the *Alliance of HBCU Museums and Galleries* that consists of 11 historically black institutions across the United States. This coalition of museums and galleries has joined to prevent and intervene risks and dangers of the mismanagement of African American collections. Dr. Robinson, as founding director, believes that the coalition numbers is evidence of strength and ensuring survival. The *2018 Viability and Visibility Project*, along with affiliations with various institutions to improve collections stewardship, is validation that the Legacy Museum's goals are parallel to the goals of the African American History and Culture program.

### **Project Work Plan**

To accomplish the goal of improving collection stewardship and storage environment, five activities will be undertaken between September 2018 and August of 2019: 1) assessing collections, 2) rehousing supplies, 3) applying shelves for dioramas and art rack system for paintings for and drawings, 4) utilizing students interested in art conservation to assist with assessment of artworks and equipment installation, 5) consulting with David Ryan regarding improvements. The attached schedule of completion identifies the sequence in which each activity will occur and how long each is expected to take to complete.

#### *Activity 1: Assessing Collections*

In David Ryan's assessment report, the large dioramas raised one of the greatest concerns. There were originally 33 dioramas created by William Edouard Scott, Charles Dawson, Robert Weaver, Erick Lindgren for the 1940 American Negro Exposition in Chicago, Illinois. These works were designed to portray various episodes of Negro and Negroid peoples to world civilization over a period of 7,000 years. In 1944, the federal government and the state of Illinois gave twenty dioramas and some paintings and sculpture to Tuskegee Institute. They were housed in the George Washington Carver Museum as a permanent exhibit of the Museum of Negro Art and Culture.<sup>2</sup> Over 70 years, the dioramas aged and were not properly managed. In 2010, Jontyle Robinson, curator of the Legacy Museum, was completely aware of the historical importance of the dioramas and was determined to salvage the surviving twenty. Arthur Page of Page Conservation in Washington D.C. was solicited to come and assess the dioramas.

Twenty dioramas are now in the Legacy Museum's storage. The dioramas are 24" deep, 55" wide, and 38" in height. So the dioramas are substantially large and take up a great amount of storage space. The dioramas are stored superimposed one atop the other on the floor and in the hallway, which is not the appropriate method to store these valuable items.

Another concern in David Ryan's assessment report was the scores of paintings and sculptures inadequately stored. Works by renowned artists such as Edmonia Lewis, William Edouard Scott, William

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<sup>2</sup> University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, *American Negro Exposition*, Chicago Coliseum-July 4 to Sept. 2: official program and guide book, 1940. <https://archive.org/details/americannegroexp00amer> Accessed in 2012.

H. Harper, Henry Ossawa Tanner, William H. Johnson, Ernest Crichlow, Floyd Colman, and Benny Andrews have been donated to the Legacy Museum. Many of the paintings are laid horizontally on surfaces on the floor stacked against other things and generally scattered about. This is not the appropriate method as paintings should always be stored vertically. According to Ryan's assessment report, an immediate plan should be implemented to install an art rack system that will host the paintings and drawings.

*Activity 2: Rehousing Artworks*

The Legacy Museum facility consists of three levels. The second and third levels are exhibition floors and the first level consists of storage space. On the first level of the Legacy Museum, the collections are stored into two separate areas: the large storage room and the small storage room. There is a hallway approximately 80 ft. in length that separates the two storage rooms. Primarily, larger collection items are stored in the large storage room and in the lengthy hallway, which is where the twenty dioramas and scores of paintings are located. The Legacy Museum staff will rehouse shelves that are located in the large storage room into the small storage room across the hall that has a great amount of unoccupied space. The rehousing of shelves in the large storage room will increase the storage capacity, which will create production space for the implementation of shelving for the dioramas and the art rack system.

*Activity 3: Applying shelves for dioramas and art rack system for paintings and drawings*

In David Ryan's assessment report, there was a recommendation to implement metal shelves that are 60" wide, 24" deep, and 8 ft. in height. However, the height of the first level at the Legacy Museum, ceiling to floor, is only 7 ft. So there is no physical way to install recommended shelves that have the capabilities of hosting the twenty dioramas. Fortunately, the Legacy Museum discovered a professional carpenter, Clint Robinson of Auburn General Home Repair in Auburn, AL, who can install custom-built metal shelves that will be mounted from the wall and will be able to host the twenty dioramas. The custom-built shelf will be installed in the large storage room along the back wall from the main entrance. The shelf will occupy the entire back wall that is approximately 25 ft. wide. The shelf will extend 5 ft. from the wall so that the dioramas can fit comfortably sidelong, which are 4 ft. and 7" wide. The dioramas are 24" deep. By storing the dioramas that are 24" deep sideways on a 25 ft. wall, 11 dioramas can fit on the top and bottom of the custom-built shelves. This is a creative solution utilizing the present design of the storage to increase storage capacity.

By addressing the physical space issue of the large dioramas, it will create more storage space in the large storage room. As a result of the increase in storage space, an art rack system will occupy the new space to address the scores of paintings and drawings from well-renowned artists that are not properly stored. The art rack system that will be installed is called a 4-Post Art Rack. The unit consists of four evenly-spaced rack channels per unit and measures 83" tall, 48" wide, and 30" deep. Each sliding rack features a standard handle and foot-operated lock/release system. Frank Skinner of Patterson Pope Company will install two 4-Post art rack units to address the issue of paintings being stored improperly and storage space. With the dioramas stored in shelves and an art rack system installed, the Legacy Museum will have the opportunity to address David Ryan's top priority in the assessment report of getting collections off the floor.

*Activity 4: Utilizing students interested in art conservation*

During June of 2017, students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities participated in a weeklong program at Yale University to learn about career opportunities in conservation of cultural

heritage.<sup>3</sup> The program, a partnership between Yale and the *Alliance of HBCU Museums and Galleries*, is aimed at increasing diversity in the predominantly white profession of cultural heritage and art conservation. Tuskegee University students participated in this program and have plans in seeking careers in art conservation. These students volunteer periodically at the Legacy Museum and have devoted themselves to play a vital role in the *2018 Viability and Visibility project*.

*Activity 5: Consulting with David Ryan regarding improvements*

Continued consultation with Mr. Ryan is essential to benchmark progress and ensure best practices. Mr. Ryan is very familiar with the museum's collections staff, and facilities and is therefore well-positioned to assess whether the project is progressing successfully. David Ryan has been providing fine art services to museums and private clients for the past 32 years.

The project director will be Dr. Jontyle Robinson, the first curator of the Legacy Museum at Tuskegee University and founding director of the *Alliance of HBCU Museums and Galleries*, who is supported by several staff members. Dr. Robinson oversees all operations of the Legacy Museum including: orchestrating the development of exhibitions, conserving collections, managing museum operations, documenting the history of the collection, and scheduling and arranging tours. Her experience and skills are shown through the rapid progression of the Legacy Museum at Tuskegee University, regionally and nationally.

In David Ryan's assessment report, he recommended that Dr. Robinson hire a collections manager to maintain collections and maintenance of the facility. As of August 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 The Legacy Museum hired Theo Moore whose credentials met and exceeded the requirements of the position recommended by Mr. Ryan. The duties and responsibilities of Mr. Moore are, but not limited to: assist with cataloguing the collection, assist with the care and maintenance of the collections, facilitate uncrating and crating of incoming/outgoing exhibitions, and work with the curator to develop new exhibits and assist with grants to augment support of the collections. Mr. Moore will assist Dr. Robinson in all activities in the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* as the project coordinator. In addition, there will be approximately four student volunteers from Tuskegee University and other historically black institutions that are interested in careers in museum management and art conservation that will assist with the project during the spring semester of 2019. Additionally, the museum operates under the auspices of Tuskegee University Library Services and works closely with the Tuskegee University Archives.

The *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* will begin September 1, 2018 and end twelve months after the initial start date to ensure that staff can work diligently on this project while performing other functions. The project is designed for installation of custom-built shelving for twenty dioramas and an art rack system for scores of paintings. The goal is to improve collection stewardship by increasing storage capacity to properly store the Legacy Museum's priceless collection.

As this is a non-cost sharing grant, the museum will be using most of the requested funds towards the purchase and installation of shelving for the dioramas and an art rack system to host the scores of paintings that are currently stored improperly. Our request of \$24,022 is based on the total cost quoted by Clint Robinson of Auburn General Home Repair in the amount of \$2,800 and Frank Skinner of Patterson

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<sup>3</sup> Yale University, *Yale and HBCUs Team Up to Help Students Soar*. Yale News: <http://news.yale.edu/2017/06/14/yale-and-hbcus-team-help-students-soar> Assessed in 06/14/17.

Pope Company in the amount of \$15,438. In addition, a \$1,600 budget will be implemented for students participating in the project and \$2,000 will be incorporated for travel to attend the Institute of Museum and Library Services designated meetings. Finally, with the inclusion of 10% of indirect costs (\$2,184) to cover parts of travel, insurance, and staff time will match the requested amount.

The Legacy Museum will track its progress through biweekly updates from Theo Moore, collections manager and project coordinator. Every two weeks we will send reported updates by e-mail to the supervisor of Library Services at Tuskegee University, David Ryan of Ryan Fine Art Service, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The updates will consist of how the project is progressing and what new steps have been taken regarding the improvements in collection stewardship.

Currently the Legacy Museum possesses only seventeen dioramas. The museum has partnered with Yale University's Institute for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage to train students in art conservation, the Art Conservation Departments at the University of Delaware and the State University of New York, Buffalo State to train African American students in art conservation using the dioramas as teaching tools. The University of Delaware is currently working on two dioramas and recently has been rewarded \$90,000 from the Kress Foundation to conserve three more dioramas.<sup>4</sup> This request to Institute of Museum and Library Services is linked to concerns regarding how the restored dioramas will be housed when they return from conservation. Updates and results of the project will be shared with our partners that are conserving the dioramas.

### **Project Result**

In the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project*, the project director will complete the final project report. The project will be considered a success after all of the activities described in the *Project Work Plan* have been completed. However, Theo Moore, project coordinator, will convene bi-weekly meetings to review progress against project targets and make adjustments to the plan of work as necessary to ensure timely completion. Project team members and volunteers will prepare weekly reports on project-related activities, production metrics, and staff time spent on the project that will be reported in the bi-weekly meetings. The collected data will ensure that strategic planning is being implemented to complete the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project*.

As mentioned in the *Project Justification*, the *2018 Viability and Visibility Project* will improve collection stewardship by increasing storage space to rehouse improperly stored collections. As a result of this project, the Legacy Museum's daily operations will display great improvements in care, conditions, and overall museum management. By correctly storing the dioramas and framed artwork, the staff will be able to remove collections off of the floor onto proper shelving. Finally, this will give the staff and volunteers the opportunity to clean, conduct maintenance projects, and operate in a safe environment.

As the only university or college in America given historical site status by an act of Congress, history plays an invaluable role in African American culture. As one of the several museums on campus, the Legacy Museum has the honor of taking care of unique possessions and telling its multi-faceted story. The outcome of this project will inform visitors of the importance for the collection stored in the museum and by the improvements that have been made in collection stewardship, visitors will have a deeper appreciation for the Legacy Museum at Tuskegee University.

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<sup>4</sup> University of Delaware, *Conserving Cultural Heritage*, UDaily: <http://www.udel.edu/udaily/2017/june/conserving-cultural-heritage/> Assessed in 06/29/17.



## Schedule of Completion

Activity 1												
Activity 2												
Activity 3												
Activity 4												
Activity 5												
	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August

Activity	Notes
Activity 1	<b>Assessing Collections-</b> analyzing storage and collections that are targeted in the 2018 Viability and Visibility project (Dioramas and Paintings)
Activity 2	<b>Rehousing Artworks-</b> relocating shelves and some collections to the small storage room that acquires more storage space. This will complete preparations for the installation of the shelves and art rack system.
Activity 3	<b>Applying shelves for dioramas and art rack system for paintings and drawings.</b>
Activity 4	<b>Utilizing students interested in art conservation-</b> Students will begin volunteer work towards the middle of the Spring semester of 2019. They will assist in reorganizing and restocking the collections onto the new shelving and art rack system.
Activity 5	<b>Consulting with David Ryan regarding improvements.</b>
August	<b>Dr. Robinson, Project Coordinator will complete the final project report to IMLS.</b>