

Dear Colleague:

Enclosed please find sample narratives, schedule of completion, and summary budget forms from 13 successful applications from the 2010 and 2011 IMLS Museums for America (MFA) grant competitions. These samples represent different types of projects from successful grantees in the three categories: Engaging Communities, Building Institutional Capacity, and Collections Stewardship. They emphasize ties to the organizational strategic plan, sustainability, and the long term benefits to the institution and its community. Each of the samples was selected to illustrate a specific aspect of a good application, as described below:

Engaging Communities

Kentucky Folk Art Center at Morehead State University is an example of a well-developed project, with a precise and thoughtfully constructed project plan. The project shows a solid understanding of audience needs and exemplifies how a small staff can be very resourceful and accomplish a great deal within its community with relatively little.

Iowa Children's Museum is an example of a project that beautifully quantifies and defines its core audience, exhibits excellent planning methods, and has strong external input and clear quantifiable evaluation measures.

Garfield Park Conservancy Alliance is as an example of an excellent community-focused project that addresses many needs in its community through innovative programming, including the use of poetry and prose. The project clearly establishes the Alliance as an organization that is a catalyst for community change by addressing practical and pragmatic issues in thoughtful and creative ways.

New York Transit Museum is an excellent example of a project that takes the idea of interpreting history and combining it with STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math) education. The proposal is comprehensive, very detailed but easy to read and clearly defines its audience.

Museum of Fine Arts, Houston is an example of a well-written application that is well-grounded in research that engages the education community. The project carefully and clearly builds on work they have been doing with elementary students and which they will use as the basis for programming for students at the middle school level. The proposal is very well articulated and builds on a long history of solid programming in this area.

Building Institutional Capacity

Gulf Coast Heritage Association is an example of a straight-forward and clearly designed plan to improve museum efficiency and staff productivity. The application demonstrates a strong sense of the timeline and staff resources needed to complete each of the project goals.

Mohonk Preserve is an example of a well-written and well-planned project that will clearly reach new and current audiences more effectively. The carefully designed proposal demonstrated the needs of the institution and successfully presented how the institution will build upon existing surveys to meet established goals and attract new audiences.

Kansas City Zoo is an example of a project that makes a strong case for the role that technology plays in capacity building and growth. The proposal also shows strong evidence of compatibility with the zoo's strategic goals, and provides a very detailed and logical project design with strong project management and an excellent set of measurable outcomes that will define project success.

Crocker Art Museum is an excellent example of a museum that recognizes its shortcomings to engage an increasing number of family visitors and has put together a comprehensive model that includes interdepartmental teams to address this paradigm shift within the museum. An impressive amount of staff development and training is included to achieve the goal of serving a more diverse audience.

Collections Stewardship

Museum of Osteopathic Medicine, A.T. Still University of Health Sciences is an example of a project that is clearly defined, detailed, and very nicely tied to strategic planning goals. It also demonstrates excellent justification for scheduling, materials, budget, and projected staffing levels.

Washington County Museum of Fine Arts is an example of a proposal that clearly ties the goals of their project to the Museums for America goals, and shows how this will increase capacity long-term. The methodology proposed is clear and precise and reflects much practical and logical thought which will have a tremendous beneficial effect on the organization's ability to control the collection going forward and fulfilling a key component of the museum's mission.

University Museum at Southern Illinois University is an example of a proposal that clearly builds on a carefully planned collections management initiative in an academic environment. The involvement of students is a real strength as well as the inclusion of how this project will not just provide internal benefits to the museum but provide value to the general public as well. The institutional impacts are very well described.

Dallas County Historical Foundation is an example of a proposal that clearly expresses how the project is pivotal to the institution's long-range plans and ties back to the strategic plan. The project outline clearly shows how intellectual control and increased dissemination will be accomplished for this collection.

We hope these sample narratives will be useful to you as models for preparing a competitive application. Please contact either Sandra Narva at (202) 653-4634, snarva@imls.gov, Steve Shwartzman at (202) 653-4641, sshwartzman@imls.gov, or Reagan Moore at (202) 653-4637, rmoore@imls.gov if you have any questions. We would be happy to assist you and discuss any questions you have as you develop your proposal. The application deadline for the 2011 Museums for America grant program is November 1, 2011.

Applications for MFA are available from the Grants.gov website (www.grants.gov). We look forward to receiving your application.

Sincerely,

The Museums for America Team