



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-10-16-0489-16
Project Category: Learning Experiences
Funding Level: \$25,001-\$150,000

Concord Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$133,249
Amount of cost share:	\$141,893

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing narratives for FY2017 applications differ from those that guided the preparation of previous applications. Be sure to use the narrative instructions in the FY2017 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Abstract: Visitor Experience Plan for the Concord Museum

The Concord Museum will develop a Visitor Experience Plan (VEP) that will guide the comprehensive reinterpretation and reinstallation of the Museum’s permanent collections. Working with a variety of stakeholders, target audiences, and consultants chosen for their expertise in relevant disciplines, the Museum will undertake an intensive one-year planning project to revitalize its visitor experience. The VEP will address the need to introduce diverse audiences to Concord’s history and convey its national significance in ways that connect past to present. Over the last several years, the Museum has conducted informal evaluations of its existing installations that indicate they are text-heavy, outdated, and no longer engaging to most visitors. Visitor orientation to Concord is also a need. Museum visitors, including local residents, regularly seek information on other sites. As the only institution that interprets all of Concord’s history, the Museum serves an important role as a “Gateway to Concord.”

While the new installations are expected to appeal to the general public, the Museum has identified three target audiences whose needs will shape the VEP: repeat adult visitors; families; and K-12 students and teachers. This comprehensive project will enable Museum staff, consultants, and representatives of target audiences to collaborate on revitalizing the Visitor Experience Plan. Four major workshops will frame the planning process:

1. **Futures:** Research, Benchmarking, and Exploration
2. **Options:** Development of Interpretive Approaches
3. **Reflections:** Evaluation of Input from Target Audiences
4. **Refinements:** Visitor Experience Plan and Conceptual Design

The Core Team for the project includes Museum staff and a consultant team. In addition, a group of Special Advisors with targeted expertise will attend the workshops and review the VEP at all stages of its development. A Gateway Committee representing Concord’s cultural and historical organizations will guide the “Gateway to Concord” experience to promote exploration of the town’s historic resources. Target audiences will provide feedback, including input on the specific interpretive strategies and techniques that engage them, at critical points throughout the process. The final VEP will be a narrative and illustrated document that presents a comprehensive conceptual design for the Museum’s permanent exhibitions, including the “Gateway to Concord” experience; Concord history galleries; period rooms; and material culture galleries. In the implementation phase following this project, the Museum will use the VEP to design, fabricate, and install the new permanent exhibitions.

The VEP will expand the Museum’s capacity to effectively interpret Concord’s history and serve target audiences through high quality, inclusive, accessible, and user-focused interpretation. The project team will research and apply best practices in interpretive methodologies and visitor engagement strategies as well as explore new approaches. Stakeholders who participate in the planning process will gain perspective on the role of history and history museums. After implementation of the VEP, intended audiences will have increased knowledge of Concord’s history, its national significance, and how the past relates not only to the present but also to their own lives. Expanded and renovated galleries will allow more objects to be put on view and to tell stories – such as those of Native Americans, African Americans, and women – that are not currently addressed. New permanent exhibits and teaching galleries will increase possibilities for object-based learning designed to help students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. The new “Gateway to Concord” entrance experience will orient visitors to Concord and increase awareness and interest in the town’s cultural and historical sites.

Front-end evaluation and regular input from stakeholders is critical to ensure that, as the VEP is developed, the project team is informed, responsive, and audience-focused. Project participants will review the plan to ensure it achieves intended outcomes and will be surveyed to measure the increase in their understanding of and interest in the Museum’s visitor experience objectives and the strategies to achieve them. The Museum has developed a broad dissemination plan to share results, recognizing that the VEP might serve as a model for history organizations nationwide seeking to revitalize their own visitor experiences, engage new audiences, and develop a sustainable course for the future.

1. PROJECT JUSTIFICATION

What do you propose to do? The Concord Museum requests a *Museums for America* grant to support the development of a Visitor Experience Plan (VEP) that will guide the comprehensive reinterpretation and reinstallation of the Museum’s permanent collections. Working with a variety of stakeholders, target audiences, and consultants chosen for their expertise in relevant disciplines, the Museum will undertake an intensive one-year planning project to revitalize the visitor experience. Shaped by the Museum’s exceptional collection, the resultant VEP will engage community representatives and experts in the field to develop compelling and audience-driven installations that ensure relevant and exciting visitor encounters with Concord’s history.

The Museum’s outstanding collection, along with its location in such a historically important town, positions the Museum to play a leading role in American history education and interpretation. There are few places in America with such a confluence of history, culture, and world-renowned ideas as Concord, MA. As the steward of a nationally significant collection of 35,000 objects that span the history of Concord from Native American settlement to the present, the Concord Museum tells the story of our shared history and identity as Americans. The collection includes icons such as the 1775 Paul Revere signal lantern; the desk on which Henry David Thoreau wrote *Walden* and “Civil Disobedience”; Ralph Waldo Emerson’s study; and major material culture holdings.

In order to remain a vital educational and community resource for future generations of visitors, the Concord Museum has recently developed a new Campus Master Plan. A critical infrastructure project is underway to renovate the Museum’s permanent galleries, create new exhibit spaces, construct a new education center with a teaching gallery for object-based learning, and provide a “Gateway to Concord” visitor orientation experience. In anticipation of these significant changes to its gallery spaces, the Concord Museum will engage staff, professional colleagues and consultants, community leaders, and representatives of target audiences to shape interpretive approaches for the redesigned galleries based on identified visitor needs. The final VEP will offer a comprehensive conceptual design for the Museum’s permanent exhibitions.

What need, problem, or challenge will your project address and how was it identified? The VEP will address the need to introduce diverse 21st-century audiences to Concord’s history and convey its national significance in ways that connect past to present. As history museums, like museums in general, strive to reach a broader public, there is considerable professional interest nationwide in exploring state-of-the-art approaches to tell stories about local and national history. The Concord Museum has long been at the forefront of using objects to interpret the past and aspires to provide continued leadership in this area. Its award-winning permanent exhibition *Why Concord?* was developed with NEH grants and opened to much acclaim in 1997. While the intellectual content of *Why Concord?* remains accurate, the installations are now showing their age. Over the last several years, the Museum has conducted informal evaluations of its existing installations via visitor surveys; input from its Education, Family Programs, Strategic Planning, and Campus Master Planning Committees; and teacher and student feedback. Such evaluation has indicated that the installations are text-heavy, outdated in their approach, and no longer engaging to most visitors. Some galleries are too small, and a lack of adequate electrical power in the Museum’s 1930 building severely limits the use of technology. The Museum is undergoing extensive renovations in 2018 as part of the building project, including installation of new mechanical and electrical systems, which will significantly enhance technological capabilities. Accordingly, the Museum is planning for the new and reconfigured galleries.

Generations of scholars of the new social history have shown the necessity of incorporating previously under-represented voices into the historical narrative. While museums have made significant progress in this arena, there is still important work to be done. The Museum’s outstanding collections afford numerous opportunities to recover the contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, and women to national life. For instance, *Yeoman Thomas Dugan*, a temporary exhibit installed in 2015, has surprised and intrigued audiences by exploring the household of a free black landowning farmer in early 19th-century Concord. Its success demonstrates the importance of exhibiting other objects in new ways, in particular the Museum’s significant collection of Native American artifacts, many of which are not currently on display.

Over the past three years, the Museum has incorporated elements of recent special exhibits into its permanent galleries. Changes include updates to the Thoreau gallery after the IMLS-supported *Early Spring: Henry Thoreau and Climate Change* (2013); reinstallation of part of *The Shot Heard Round the World: April 19, 1775* (2014) into the *Why Concord?* history galleries; and the enlivening of the period rooms in conjunction with *Behind Closed Doors: Asleep in New England* (2014). Visitors have responded very positively to these changes, as they are able to draw meaningful connections from objects displayed in new ways. These minor renovations provide a glimpse of interpretive possibilities and demonstrate more clearly the need to comprehensively reinstall the Museum’s collections.

A final need is visitor orientation to the town of Concord. Museum visitors, including those from local and nearby communities, regularly seek information on other sites in Concord, which lacks adequate way-finding information and a full-service, year-round visitor center. As the only institution that interprets all of Concord’s history, open 362 days a year with facilities such as restrooms and a shop, the Museum serves an important role as a “Gateway to Concord.” The Museum’s 1990-designed entrance and visitor services area is not functional for today’s visitors and staff, who want to encourage guests to use the Museum as a gateway to explore Concord.

Who will benefit from your project? While the new installations are expected to appeal to the general public, the Museum has identified three target audiences whose needs will shape the VEP:

- Repeat adult visitors
- Families
- K-12 students and teachers

These audiences represent approximately 60% of total Museum visitors, including its membership and donor base. Representatives from these groups will be integrally involved in the development of the VEP. While a substantial number of the Museum’s visitors are tourists (coming from at least 50 miles away), they are generally one-time visitors. Revitalizing the visitor experience for the target audiences will ultimately benefit all Museum-goers.

Local and regional adult and family visitors constitute an important part of the Museum’s audience, and a key goal is to encourage them to return more often by offering engaging experiences in the permanent galleries. Research reveals that families seek authentic intergenerational experiences that spark curiosity, connections, and lifelong learning and discovery. The Museum’s Family Programs Committee has helped identify strategies for enhancing and expanding programming for families and will participate in the VEP planning process. Creating more user-friendly installations for these groups is essential to building a sustainable future audience for the Museum as it evolves from a traditional history museum into a dynamic learning and gathering space for the community.

K-12 students and teachers are also a priority audience. A robust school program serves over 10,000 students annually (a nearly 50% growth since 2012), including all Concord third-graders as well as high schoolers enrolled in *Rivers and Revolutions*, an experiential learning program. Since 2014, all fifth-graders from Lowell, MA, an economically depressed city, receive free bus transportation to the Museum and participate free of charge; the program is being extended to nearby Lawrence, MA, in 2016. School programs are object-based, hands-on explorations taught by professionally trained educators and fully aligned with MA curriculum standards. Recent work with underserved students, English language learners, and students with physical and behavioral challenges will influence approaches to exhibit content and design for a more effective and accessible learning environment.

How will your project advance your institution’s strategic plan? In 2011, Executive Director Peggy Burke initiated the Museum’s current Strategic Plan with input from Board members, community leaders, and local stakeholders. The VEP project is a direct outcome of the Strategic Plan and is critical to advancing the Museum’s mission and the Strategic Plan’s goals for engagement, leadership in the community and history education, and campus improvements. The Museum has designed the VEP planning process to achieve the Strategic Plan goal of *Transforming the Museum*, which mandates that the Museum offer visitors an engaging, enjoyable experience that stimulates critical thinking about Concord’s past and its relevance to the present. The “Gateway to Concord”

experience, developed with input from leaders of local cultural organizations, will further the objective for *Community Leadership*, which directs the Museum to collaborate with other organizations to strengthen interpretation of Concord’s history. Advancing the Strategic Plan’s priority for *History Education*, K-12 teachers and students will take part in planning the reinstallations, expanding opportunities for object-based learning at the Museum. Finally, the VEP supports the Campus Master Plan, outlined in the Strategic Plan’s goal for an *Improved Campus*.

How will your project address the goals of this program? The VEP will place visitors at the center of each gallery experience, fostering meaningful learning experiences through self-directed discovery. The project will identify and address the needs of target audiences; increase the Museum’s ability to serve as a dynamic and inclusive destination for adults, families, students, and teachers; and support the development and sustainability of a nation of learners. Consistent with the goals of the IMLS Strategic Plan, Concord stories and artifacts will be linked to themes that resonate with today’s global society. For example, Concord’s role in the American Revolution will encourage thinking about civic engagement; similarly, Thoreau’s concern for racial justice and the environment and Emerson’s interest in self-reliance will stimulate comparisons with current social priorities. By connecting historical narratives to contemporary issues and demonstrating how individuals have the power to shape events, the new installations will encourage participants to be thoughtful members of their communities and active citizens of the world.

2. IMPACT

Performance Measure Statements. The Museum’s Performance Measure Statements are: “My understanding of/ interest in the Museum’s visitor experience objectives and the strategies to achieve them has increased as a result of my involvement in the planning process,” based on the IMLS Performance Goal to “develop and provide inclusive and accessible learning opportunities.” Stephanie Downey of Randi Korn & Associates (RK&A), a leading evaluation firm, is conducting front-end evaluation for the project and will also assist the Museum in refining and evaluating the performance measure statements. RK&A will create a survey document that will be distributed among key staff, target audiences, and stakeholders; the firm will analyze findings and interpret survey results and their implications. A broad dissemination plan will share results with all project participants and stakeholders, the professional museum community, and IMLS in its final report.

Describe your project’s intended results that will address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified. The VEP will expand the Museum’s capacity to effectively interpret Concord’s history and serve target audiences through high quality, inclusive, and accessible interpretation. The project team will research and apply best practices in interpretive methodologies and visitor engagement strategies as well as explore new approaches in the VEP. Thoughtful use of experiential learning techniques and technology (enabled by electrical upgrades in the galleries in 2018) will create greater engagement with the Museum’s collections. The VEP will provide a conceptual framework for compelling storylines, presentation of objects, and interactive displays that will enhance visitor learning, stimulate dialogue, and encourage visitors to make connections and think critically about historical questions and their contemporary equivalents.

Expanded and renovated galleries will increase physical space within the Museum, allowing more objects to be put on view and to tell stories – such as those of Native Americans, African Americans, and women – that are not currently addressed. New permanent exhibits and teaching galleries will expand possibilities for student learning by allowing teachers to design lessons using objects from the Museum’s collection. More flexible, less linear spaces will also accommodate an increased number of tour and school groups. By making the installations accessible to expanded audiences, the Museum will increase its impact and reaffirm its significance as a vital community, state, and national resource.

To address the need for visitor orientation, the VEP will include a “Gateway to Concord” entrance experience that promotes exploration of the town’s many historic resources. A Gateway Committee, comprised of leaders of Concord’s cultural and historical organizations, will be involved in planning this new visitor experience to ensure the Museum interprets their sites in appealing, accessible formats that encourage visitation. [See Supporting

Document 3.] The Gateway area will create a dynamic interpretive framework for experiencing both the Museum and the community.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the intended audience change as a result of this project? Stakeholders who participate in the planning process will gain perspective on the role of history and history museums, strengthening the Museum’s reputation as a vital community resource. After implementation of the VEP, intended audiences will have increased knowledge of Concord’s history, its national significance, and how the past relates not only to the present but also to their own lives. Rather than viewing history as isolated facts, objects, or events, audiences will discover that history can be meaningful, exciting, and personally relevant. Families will perceive the Museum as a dynamic center for intergenerational learning and cultural engagement that kindles curiosity, empathy, and dialogue across ages. For K-12 students and teachers, the new permanent and teaching galleries will provide opportunities for object-based learning designed to help students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills. Planned outcomes also include greater awareness and interest in Concord’s cultural and historical sites and increased Museum visitation by target audiences.

What tangible products will result from your project? The final Visitor Experience Plan (VEP) will be a narrative and illustrated document that presents a comprehensive conceptual design for the Museum’s permanent exhibitions, including a “Gateway to Concord” experience; Concord history galleries; period rooms; and material culture galleries. The VEP will provide a gallery layout that reflects the needs and interests of targeted visitors; include object-specific treatment examples and representative gallery renderings; and recommend interpretive strategies, including the use of experiential learning and technology, both individually and in combination. The VEP will offer a unifying interpretive vision to guide future changes to the Museum’s exhibitions, visitor services, and school and public programming. In the implementation phase following this project, the Museum will use the VEP to design, fabricate, and install the new permanent exhibitions.

How will you sustain the benefits of your project? The next phase after completion of the VEP is implementation, timed to correspond to the building and renovation project that will affect gallery layout, mechanical systems, and visitor services. In addition to submitting an IMLS *Museums for America* grant application for implementation, the Museum will seek funding from regional and national foundations, government agencies, corporations, and individual donors to complete final design, production, and installation of the new exhibitions, which will occur in stages through 2020. Implementation will involve formative and summative evaluation to ensure that the redesigned galleries meet the needs of target audiences as outlined in the VEP. Additional consultants, including a lead exhibition designer and design fabrication firm, will be hired. The Museum will continue to strengthen relationships with stakeholders involved in the planning process in order to sustain these fruitful partnerships well into the future. The VEP will increase the Museum’s long-term capacity to meet the needs of local adult visitors, families, and students and educators, who will be more engaged with the Museum and more likely to become members, donors, and future leaders of the institution.

3. PROJECT DESIGN

What specific activities, including evaluation and performance measurements, will you carry out?

This comprehensive project will enable Museum staff, consultants, and representatives of target audiences to collaborate in a process that will inform and strengthen the Museum’s plans to reinstall and reinterpret its permanent collections through the development of a revitalized Visitor Experience Plan (VEP).

Before the grant period begins, the Museum will review the key interpretive opportunities and constraints related to the reinstallation of its permanent collections, a process that was a focus of its Strategic Plan and Campus Master Plan. The Museum is also currently gathering preliminary data and identifying and engaging stakeholders. Staff are working with a consulting team from Community Action Partners (CAP), an alumni program of the Harvard Business School, on an audience and marketing study that includes analysis of visitor data; interviews with community leaders and Museum supporters; identification of benchmark organizations for comparison; and

research on audience demographics, interests, and needs. Their findings and recommendations, to be presented in May 2016, will provide a clearer understanding of the Museum’s current audiences and partners.

Four major workshops will frame the planning process during the one-year grant period:

1. **Futures:** Research, Benchmarking, and Exploration
2. **Options:** Development of Interpretive Approaches
3. **Reflections:** Evaluation of Input from Target Audiences
4. **Refinements:** Visitor Experience Plan and Conceptual Design

The Core Team for the project includes Museum staff and a consultant team, who will communicate and collaborate between workshops to advance the project. In addition, a group of five Special Advisors with targeted expertise will attend the workshops and review the VEP at all stages of its development. A Gateway Committee representing Concord’s cultural and historical organizations will guide the development of the “Gateway to Concord” experience. John Sharon, a local history teacher and disability expert, will provide guidance on accessibility in design. Target audiences will provide feedback, including input on the specific interpretive strategies and techniques that engage them, at critical points throughout the process. In addition to strengthening the VEP, the active involvement of key audiences throughout the planning process will encourage their investment in the outcome. Some meetings and workshops will be held off-site due to frequent school program activity in available Museum meeting spaces. The Museum will also contract with the American Association of State and Local History (AASLH) to design a customized gate survey through their successful *Visitors Count!* program, which will be distributed to 300 general Museum visitors to provide additional research on existing audiences.

As mentioned above, Stephanie Downey of RK&A will work closely with the Museum to provide evaluation services, including how to design and evaluate performance measurements. She will conduct in-depth front-end interviews with 35 potential users, representing a cross-section of target audiences, to explore existing knowledge, preconceptions, and interests; what they think about and react to when confronted with specific ideas; which ideas catch their attention and why; and barriers to experiencing/understanding these ideas. Following data analysis, the Reflections Workshop is a critical juncture to interpret and apply evaluation results to planning and modify approaches if necessary.

To further strengthen interpretation and build relationships, staff will visit and evaluate exhibitions at several museums facing similar challenges. Proposed sites include, among others, the Cape Ann Museum; Museum of African American History, Boston; New Bedford Whaling Museum; New-York Historical Society; and Museum of the City of New York. The Core Team will also virtually tour exemplary cultural institutions around the world.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

Core Team: Executive Director **Peggy Burke**, Ph.D., will serve as Project Director, with overall responsibility for the project. Burke, who has led the Museum since 2011, provides visionary and strategic leadership skills and an outstanding background in the arts and humanities, fundraising, and non-profit management. Consultant **Andrew Anway**, founder of Amaze Design, will serve as Team Leader. He brings expertise in exhibition planning and design and will facilitate workshops and prepare the VEP with assistance from two graphic designers at Amaze.

In addition to Anway, consultants on the Core Team include: **Stephanie Downey/RK&A** (evaluation); **Linda Norris** (visitor engagement and audience advocacy); and **Sara Smith /Richard Lewis Media Group** (interpretation and multi-media production). Smith will develop media concepts and assist Anway in facilitating workshops and writing the VEP. [See Supporting Documents 1 & 2.] Given the importance of the VEP to Museum priorities, the Core Team also deeply involves key staff: **David Wood**, Curator; **Leah Walczak**, Director of Education and Public Programs; **Carol Haines**, Manager of Exhibitions and Design; **Adrienne Donohue**, Collections Manager; and **Jennifer Gratz**, Manager of Student, Group, and Family Learning.

This Core Team of staff and consultants will oversee development of the VEP through regularly scheduled meetings, phone conferences, and online collaboration. **Sarah Conlin**, Coordinator of Administration and Communication, will serve as Project Coordinator and will organize project logistics, manage the budget, and oversee the schedule.

Special Advisors: Five Special Advisors will attend workshops and provide targeted expertise: **Julie Bernson** (student and teacher engagement); **Elliot Bostwick Davis** (presentation of material culture); **Holly Houghton** (interactive design and technology, with remote participation by **Phillip Tiongson**); **Laurel Thatcher Ulrich** (use of objects for historical inquiry); and **Sarah Watkins** (family engagement). [See Supporting Documents 1 & 2.]

When and in what sequence will your activities occur? The project will commence in October 2016 and will conclude with the dissemination of the VEP in September 2017.

FUTURES (October-November 2016): Research, Benchmarking, and Exploration

- Hold kick-off meeting with Core Team to get oriented to Concord Museum, visit key Concord cultural and historical sites, and confirm project goals and schedule (Core Team)
- Visit benchmark museums to evaluate exhibits and interpretation (to occur through May 2017) (CM staff)
- Work with AASLH *Visitors Count!* to create customized Gate Visitor Survey and distribute to 300 general visitors, over three visitation seasons, through August 2017 (AASLH / CM staff)
- Hold initial Gateway Committee meeting to explore interpretive and audience needs relative to “Gateway” experience at CM (Anway / Norris / CM staff)
- Conduct front-end evaluation of exhibition ideas and concepts, to be conducted with target audiences of adults, families, teachers, and students; design performance measurements survey (Downey/RK&A)
- Conduct FUTURES workshop with Core Team and Special Advisors to review CM interpretive opportunities and constraints; discuss audience expectations and needs; consider the role of technology and experiential learning in exhibition interpretation as well as their interrelationship; assess best practices, strategies, and techniques and consider their application to interpretive directions for the CM (Anway / Core Team / Special Advisors)

OPTIONS (December 2016-February 2017): Development of Interpretive Approaches

December 2016-January 2017: Develop for consideration a menu of viable options and strategies that meet identified needs, including options for presentation and engagement with objects and application of technology and user-driven engagement; create sketches, diagrams, and plans to illustrate options (Anway / Amaze Design)

February 2017: Conduct OPTIONS workshop to present and review interpretive options. Consider proposed gallery layouts and interpretive spaces within the Museum, including the “Gateway to Concord” experience, Concord history galleries, period rooms, and material culture galleries (Anway / Core Team / Special Advisors)

REFLECTIONS (March-May 2017): Evaluation of Input from Targeted Audiences

March 2017: Conduct REFLECTIONS workshop on how to interpret and apply evaluation results to the interpretive planning process (Downey/RK&A / Core Team). Develop preferred interpretive and visitor experience options for various Museum spaces. Prepare sample exhibit ideas and techniques, including five simple gallery interactives (Anway / Amaze / Core Team)

April-May 2017: Hold second Gateway Committee meeting and five group conversations with target audiences to review and solicit input regarding sample exhibit ideas and techniques, including interactives (Anway / Norris / CM staff). Incorporate data and findings from front-end evaluation, group conversations, and initial *Visitors Count!* survey results, as appropriate, to planning efforts. Begin conceptual development of galleries (Anway / Amaze)

REFINEMENTS (June-September 2017): Visitor Experience Plan and Conceptual Design

June-July 2017: Conduct REFINEMENTS workshop to review initial plans, including conceptual development of galleries, object-specific treatment examples, and suggested interpretive strategies (Anway / Core Team / Special

Advisors). Prepare draft of the VEP, including a gallery layout that reflects the interests and needs of target visitors, object-specific treatment examples and representative gallery renderings, and recommended interpretive strategies, including the use of experiential learning and technology (Anway / Amaze / Smith)

August-September 2017: Hold third Gateway Committee meeting and second series of group conversations with target audiences to review draft; include survey to assess how participants' understanding of and interest in the Museum's visitor experience objectives and strategies for achieving them has increased as a result of their involvement in the planning process (this survey data, relating to the IMLS performance goal to develop and provide inclusive and accessible learning opportunities, will be shared with IMLS in the final report) (Anway / Norris / CM staff)

- Distribute and analyze final *Visitors Count!* report (AASLH / CM staff)
- Based upon input, revise draft VEP and circulate to Core Team and Special Advisors; include survey to assess performance measurements (Anway / Amaze / Smith)
- Review draft VEP and provide input (Core Team / Special Advisors)
- Finalize VEP and share with all stakeholders, including groups, interviewees, and members of Gateway Committee; include, as necessary, survey to assess performance measurements (Anway / Amaze / CM staff)
- Analyze performance measurements, including how planning process enhanced knowledge of visitor experience objectives and the strategies to achieve them among stakeholders, partners, and staff (CM staff / Downey/RK&A)

What financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities?

The development of the VEP is a very high priority for the Museum, as the reinstallation of its permanent collections is integral to the building and renovation project. As such, the Museum will devote significant staff time to this project. In addition to the Core Team, personnel from administration, finance, and communications will provide project coordination and support. The Museum has an outstanding track record of accomplishing projects on time and on budget and has developed a comprehensive plan of work to ensure the planning project will be effectively managed and successfully completed.

The budget for the project is \$275,142, with a request of \$133,249 – 48% of overall project costs – from IMLS. The Concord Museum will provide a cost share of \$141,893, which includes staff time, in-kind contributions (the time of the Gateway Committee and John Sharon), and overhead. Following the grant period, the Museum is strongly committed to implementing the VEP and will seek implementation support from foundations, local businesses, and individuals with a deep interest in collections, education, and tourism. The Museum has a strong fundraising track record and is confident in its ability to raise the necessary funds. It has a solid financial profile and has operated with a balanced budget for the past nineteen years, including successfully increasing the operating budget from \$1.35 million in FY12 to \$1.7 million in FY15.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results? Burke, Anway, and Conlin will be responsible for keeping the project on track and reviewing project activities and consultant assignments. The planning process will be highly iterative; the four core workshops and various stakeholder meetings and conversations will allow participants to review and provide feedback on ideas and approaches at every stage of the process. Input from stakeholders is critical to ensure that, as the VEP is developed, the project team is informed, responsive, and audience-focused while providing opportunities for positive redirection if necessary.

How and with whom will you share your project's results? The Museum has developed a broad dissemination plan, recognizing that the VEP might serve as a model for history organizations nationwide seeking to revitalize their own visitor experiences, engage new audiences, and develop a sustainable course for the future. Accordingly, the Museum will share the VEP directly with key stakeholders, including staff, consultants, the Gateway Committee, interviewees, and group participants. Further, staff will share lessons learned and evaluation results through informal discussions with peers and professional development conferences, such as the New England Museum Association, American Alliance of Museums, and AASLH. The Museum will make the VEP publicly available on its website and will share project activities and results in its quarterly newsletter and regular e-communications to 5,000 subscribers.

