



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-30-17-0272-17
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: \$25,001-\$500,000

Hanford Mills Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$140,200
Amount of cost share:	\$140,588

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 FY2018 Museums for America grant program differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2017 applications. This year, the maximum that may be requested from IMLS is \$250,000. Be sure to use the instructions in the FY2018 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Abstract: Hanford Mills Museum's Found-in-Collections Processing Project

Hanford Mills Museum (HMM) requests IMLS: Museums for America Collections Stewardship funding in the amount of \$140,200 for a 33-month project to complete its Found-in-Collections Processing Project, the next phase of its collections management initiative. This initiative seeks to achieve goals identified through HMM's Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) participation and addresses short-term collections goals as well as preparation for longer-term goals of improved collections management and a future collections storage and research facility. IMLS funding will allow HMM to increase staff capacity and collections expertise with Collections Technician and Assistants positions and to invest in materials to improve object management.

Through an IMLS-funded full site inventory project, the collections team has already identified 18,788 objects that are not numbered, and they expect to find a total of at least 20,000 found-in-collections objects by the end of the project. The Found-in-Collections Processing Project will address 9,000 of these objects. Those reconciled with their records will be reconnected to their paperwork; those not reconciled but determined to be part of the permanent collection will be formally processed; and those determined to be part of the education or otherwise non-collection objects will be removed from permanent storage and marked accordingly.

Project activities will include: 1) Completing preparation and administrative activities related to initiating and implementing the project; 2) Completing research and reconciliation activities to reconnect found-in-collections objects with their records where possible; 3) Evaluating the remaining found-in-collections objects to determine whether they belong in the permanent collection 4) Responsibly and ethically removing and processing objects determined to be education or other non-collections objects; 5) Completing accessioning and cataloging processes on found-in-collections objects determined to be part of the permanent collection. The project will be considered a success after all of the activities described in the Plan of Work have been completed for 9,000 found-in-collections objects.

Improving collections care and management is one of HMM's highest immediate and long-term priorities. This project will drastically improve HMM's management of its collections and the staff's understanding of the number and scope of the collection. It will also complete more of the necessary steps towards planning for a collections storage and research building in the future, which will provide a safe storage environment and improve the effectiveness of collections care. Completing these project activities will help HMM to continue its progress towards exemplary stewardship and mission fulfillment, more effectively using its collections to advance HMM's interpretive goals and enhance programs, and provide greater public access to the collections.

HMM staff will use the project to further demonstrate the significance of the HMM collections, the scale and importance of collections work, and the effectiveness of a dedicated collections position in contributing to the staff team's achievements. IMLS support for this initiative will strengthen a culture of and commitment to collections management. Funding will position HMM to leverage future funding for operations (including making a stronger case for the impact of additional salary support for professional collections staff) and major collections-related projects (including support for Master Planning and a collections storage and research facility) from funders who have traditionally supported the Museum and from new funders. HMM has demonstrated its capacity to successfully undertake and complete large projects, including its historic power restoration projects and its current IMLS-funded inventory project, and it seeks to serve as a model of how small and rural sites can accomplish major collections projects and embrace best practices.

Project Justification

Hanford Mills Museum (HMM) requests IMLS: Museums for America Collections Stewardship funding in the amount of \$140,200 for a 33-month project to complete its Found-in-Collections Processing Project, the next phase of the Museum's collections management initiative. This initiative seeks to achieve goals identified through HMM's Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) participation, including improved collections management and preparation for a future collections storage and research facility. The Found-in-Collections Processing Project will address 9,000 of the found-in-collections objects identified in the full-site inventory that is currently underway. IMLS funding will allow HMM to increase staff capacity and collections expertise with Collections Technician and Assistants positions and to invest in materials to improve object management.

Organizational History & Challenges: Since it became a museum HMM has faced a number of collections-related challenges due to its history as a working water-powered rural industrial complex and later a private historical attraction. HMM's collections include large and small industrial equipment, domestic items, photographs, and an archive of the mill's historic business records. These collections are stored throughout fifteen historic structures, many of which were not designed to store the number and types of objects that they currently hold. The collections therefore present a potential danger to the structures and to staff working in these buildings (see Attachment 12 for site map). The site is located at the intersection of several natural and man-made waterways, including two creeks and the mill pond and millrace infrastructure.

An example of HMM's collections challenges is the daunting number of objects that have yet to be formally accessioned and cataloged. These objects include lumber sawn at the mill and products made and sold when it was an operating business. Objects of questionable provenance were added to the site in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the complex was transformed into a private historical attraction, prior to its chartering as a non-profit museum in 1973. Portions of the collection have been accessioned and cataloged, but these efforts have been limited. Many of these objects have become disconnected from their donation records because they were not numbered and cataloged at the time of acquisition. Because HMM operates as a working historic site, the Museum also contains tools and parts that could potentially be confused with the permanent collection since it includes historic examples of the same kinds of items that staff use to operate and maintain the mill. Other objects are used for demonstration and educational purposes, but past HMM staff accessioned many of these items into the permanent collection. Found-in-collections (FIC) objects used for educational purposes also need to be reconciled to see if they were accessioned in the past.

Around 2000, before HMM's current professional staff team was in place, the Museum's Board prioritized the recreation of the mill's late-nineteenth century historic steam power plant. Since then, HMM has made great strides in expanding and interpreting the mill's historic power generation with the successful establishment of an operating, historically accurate recreation of the steam plant and part of the water turbine power generation system. The staff responded to these operational additions by developing a new interpretive plan in 2012 – 2013. The extensive efforts to enhance the mill's relevance with restored historic power sources (2001 – 2012), recovery from a major flood (2006), the 2008 recession and resulting staff cut-backs (2008 – 2012), and stewardship projects to maintain the integrity of several of HMM's historic structures limited in-depth collections management activities.

Collections Management Initiative Progress: The Museum has restored much of its capacity and refocused its efforts on pressing collections needs. HMM underwent staff restructuring in 2012, including the addition of a

new Education and Curatorial Initiatives Manager, who oversees collections management, interpretation, educational programming and exhibits. The Museum's 2012 – 2014 and 2015 – 2017 Strategic Plans addressed collections needs as high priority and HMM committed to investing the resources necessary to continue making stewardship improvements. Two significant activities pertaining to collections have been initiated since: HMM participated in and completed the CAP process in 2014 and is currently completing an IMLS-funded inventory project with the help of a temporary Collections Technician and part-time assistants. Because of the limited amount of time that current permanent staff can dedicate to collections-related projects, HMM has greatly benefited from the Collections Technician's focused work on collections needs.

When the Education and Curatorial Initiatives Manager began working at HMM in January 2013, the staff immediately began to formally evaluate the large-scale preservation needs of the collections and buildings. HMM applied for and received a CAP grant which, along with additional funding, supported the completion of an extended assessment by two consultants for three days in the summer of 2014 (see Attachments 13 and 14). During the CAP process, both assessors cited the lack of safe and appropriate collections storage in the historic buildings that make up HMM's site. Because of the site's location near water – ideal for a working mill but problematic for a museum – HMM is at high risk of flooding, and most of the buildings suffer from some degree of moisture and humidity issues. The site experienced major floods in 1996 and 2006, and both floods affected collections storage areas.

Both CAP assessors stated that none of the current storage areas can be converted into an adequate permanent space for the collections, due especially to their inherent risk of flooding. They recommended that HMM begin two major long-term planning efforts: a plan for a new collections storage facility and a master plan to evaluate and prioritize all of the site's needed work. As Eric Gradoia, architectural assessor, stated in his final report, "Owing to the need for a safe, secure, dedicated storage/conservation building, the construction of a new building dedicated for this purpose and use should be seriously considered. Without such a building, the full potential of the museum as an institution is severely restricted." With a new building still years away, the assessors also prioritized short-term goals including mitigating environmental and storage issues in current storage areas to protect HMM's collections and historic structures. Gradoia identified several buildings with load issues because collections are stored in areas that were not designed to handle the weight. Lisa Goldberg, collections assessor, additionally highlighted the lack of organization in collections storage, stating, "the sheer volume of items stored onsite will necessitate sorting and triage activities. The museum can plan most effectively for large-scale collections projects by striving to re-organize, re-categorize and effectively document collection items." In order to plan for a new building, the staff must first gain an accurate knowledge of the collection's number and scope, as well as an understanding of the objects' needs.

The HMM staff has prioritized and begun to implement collections projects based on the CAP process and recommendations. A number of projects have been completed or are currently underway.

StEPS Enrollment: HMM enrolled in the StEPS program (Standards and Excellence Program for History Organizations) through the American Association for State and Local History. The program is helping HMM to look critically and comprehensively at the CAP assessment results and its collections management.

Core Documents: The HMM Board approved a new Collections Management Plan in 2016. The new plan reflects New York State laws on abandoned property and undocumented objects, formally identifies an education collection that is separate from the permanent collection, and creates a tiered system for the

permanent collection that prioritizes the care and management of collections items with the strongest relationships to the historic site and HMM's mission. Staff have also updated the Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan.

Records Management: The Education and Curatorial Initiatives Manager is consolidating and organizing previously scattered accession and other collections records, which will drastically improve the efficiency of future research. This effort has revealed a large number of objects referenced in deed-of-gift forms and other records, but without any connection to object numbers. The Education and Curatorial Initiatives Manager is creating a list of objects mentioned in donation and accession paperwork but not accounted for in the current object records, which will be a resource as reconciling efforts continue on a large scale. Staff is also inputting records from more than 1,000 discovered paper catalog records that were not in HMM's PastPerfect database.

Full-Site Inventory: HMM is currently implementing its first full-site inventory of non-archival collections through another IMLS-funded MFA grant project. The inventory includes assigning tracking numbers to unmarked objects, photographing each object, and recording key data including location, basic description, measurements, and basic condition information. The staff initially estimated that the inventory would create records for an additional 3-6,000 previously-unprocessed objects. As of November 15 the project staff has identified 18,788 of these objects in less than 12 of the 24-month project, along with 5,049 numbered objects. Based on observations of the buildings and collections yet to be inventoried, the project team anticipates that a total of at least 20,000 FIC objects will be identified by the end of the inventory.

Storage improvements: Staff have increased ventilation to areas with moisture problems, are moving objects where the load risks to the buildings are the greatest, and are removing easily distinguishable non-collections materials from collections storage spaces. Much of this work is part of the scope of the currently-funded IMLS project, along with providing basic housekeeping in the spaces and for the objects.

Identifying Interpretive Resources: HMM is using the inventory process to identify objects that can strengthen its interpretation through programs and exhibits. This list will be used as the education team reviews the interpretive plan in early 2017 and begins to plan programming for upcoming seasons, including STEM-focused programming and community dialogue programs.

The sheer number of FIC objects that have already been identified through the current inventory is beyond the range that the collections team can reconcile and process within the scope of the current project plan and funding. The proposed Found-in-Collections Processing Project will provide the resources necessary to complete this significant task for 9,000 of the objects and mark another significant step towards documenting the entirety of the permanent collection.

Project Benefits and Goals: This project directly benefits the long- and short-term care of HMM's collections. The main project goals are to further improve the management of HMM's artifact collections and to collect data that can contribute to an evaluation of the space needs for a new collections facility. The Museum aims to move towards better collections management and care so that objects can be more effectively preserved, and so that staff can provide greater public access to collections items and use objects and their related records more effectively in interpretation, programming and fulfilling HMM's mission. HMM will demonstrate to visitors and community members the significance of the collections as staff and volunteers make progress in the structures throughout the site.

Institutional Strategic Plan Advancement: HMM is finishing year two in a three-year strategic plan (2015 – 2017) that the Board adopted on December 6, 2014. Trustees actively engaged in developing the plan’s goals and objectives through Board committees and at a day-long strategic thinking retreat with staff and stakeholders. The plan’s first goal is to begin implementing the collections priorities identified through the CAP process; both staff and Board members are committed to achieving this goal. Collections-related work will continue to be a priority in planning for 2018 – 2020.

The Found-in-Collections Processing Project will also support other Strategic Plan goals and objectives. It will support the goal to increase capacity of staff and facilities to deliver new interpretive content and implement sustainable energy practices, especially through its objective to “continue planning and implementation of ongoing preservation, stabilization and facility and infrastructure improvement projects.” The project demonstrates HMM’s commitment to sustainability, a major part of the mission and Strategic Plan, by preserving objects and historic structures in a responsible and effective manner. HMM’s long-term fund development goals include preparing for and funding the new building as well as making additional steps towards a more concrete understanding of collections. This project will help to achieve these objectives and better inform future collections fundraising activities.

Project Work Plan

Project Activities: Project activities will include: 1) Completing preparation and administrative activities related to initiating and implementing the project; 2) Completing research and reconciliation activities to reconnect FIC objects with their records where possible; 3) Evaluating the remaining FIC objects to determine whether they belong in the permanent collection 4) Responsibly and ethically removing and processing objects determined to be education or other non-collections objects; 5) Completing accessioning and cataloging processes on FIC objects determined to be part of the permanent collection.

Pre-Grant Activities (December 2016 – November 2017): In order to prepare for the grant project and to continue taking steps towards the CAP recommendations, HMM staff will work to complete the activities of the current IMLS-funded project and work on preparatory projects prior to the IMLS award notifications:

- Continue consolidating and organizing accession and collections records. Staff will identify resources that will be useful to the process of research and reconciling undocumented objects.
- Continue implementing current IMLS-funded project to organize collections storage areas, implement housekeeping activities, and complete the site’s first full inventory.
- Continue identifying and reconciling objects: Staff will work to match undocumented objects with collections records and reconnect them with their accession documentation. They will also begin to identify objects that are part of the education collection and therefore do not belong in the permanent collections, removing them to a separate space for processing and organization. While the inventory team has encountered significantly more objects than anticipated, which will cut into time originally planned for research and reconciliation, HMM still hopes to have processed at least 1,500 of the FIC objects by the end of the current grant project.

Post-Award Activities (beginning December 1, 2017)

- **Administrative activities:** Administrative activities will include hiring project staff; training staff and volunteers in collections management and object handling procedures; tracking progress through

biweekly meetings, review of research and catalog records; and tracking grant expenditures, matching funds and information for IMLS reporting.

- **Research and reconciling:** The collections team will review the FIC objects against the list of object records in PastPerfect that are not identified in the inventory; Deed-of-Gift forms and accession records that are not currently connected to their specific items; old newsletters and Board and committee reports; and other curatorial and collections records. Objects that can be connected to HMM's collection in one of these ways will be reconciled and formally connected to these records through updates to PastPerfect and object labeling.
- **FIC object evaluation:** The HMM acquisitions committee and Board collections committee will review the list of irreconcilable objects and determine that they belong in one of three categories: 1) permanent collection (based on criteria in Collections Management Plan); 2) education collection or non-collections objects (separate from the permanent collection); or 3) objects that do not meet criteria for keeping at the Museum in either of the previous two categories and are therefore slated for deaccessioning consideration following best practices in the field. The acquisitions committee will meet at least every other month and the Board committee will meet at least quarterly (with emailed updates from the acquisitions committee after each of their meetings).
- **Non-collections object processing:** For objects determined to be part of the education collection, the collections team will remove those objects from permanent collections storage and process them into the education collection, permanently marking them to prevent future confusion. Similarly, any non-collections objects such as tools used for maintenance will also be removed from permanent collections storage, permanently marked, and given to the Mill Operations Manager to manage.
- **Accessioning and cataloging:** Once objects are confirmed to be part of the permanent collection, staff will formally accession them into the collection. Accession numbers will reflect their FIC status, a permanent object ID number will be assigned, key data will be transferred from the inventory spreadsheet into the PastPerfect database, and staff will complete the cataloging process by adding other research and data into the database and completing a condition report for each object. Photographs taken during the inventory process will be added to each object record in PastPerfect. Staff will also update the spreadsheet used to track FIC objects with each object's permanent number to ensure that each FIC object is eventually addressed.

Post-Grant Activities (Beginning September 2020):

- **Deaccessioning and disposal of undocumented objects:** All FIC objects determined to not belong in the permanent or education collections will be subject to the full deaccessioning process in order to provide full consideration, communication and transparency, following the parameters of New York's undocumented property and deaccessioning laws and HMM's Collections Management Plan.
- **Continued collections management activities:** Staff will complete processing of the remaining FIC objects and then move to the rest of the permanent collection and identify objects that belong in the education collection (and have historically been used as such) but that were processed into the permanent collection at some point in the past. Staff will prepare these objects for Board consideration to deaccession from the permanent collection into the education collection. Long-term, the entire permanent collection will be organized into its new tiered system and objects that do not support the mission of the organization will also be identified for deaccession consideration. These activities will give HMM a much more correct idea of the number of objects that belong in the permanent collection.

- **Space planning** for future collections storage and research facility: Once the HMM staff team has a solid understanding of the complete contents of its collection, staff can use that information and work with a specialist to determine the space needs for collections storage in planning for a new building. Planning will also consider space needed for collections processing, care, treatment and research.
- **Fund development:** As HMM continues to better understand its collections needs, staff can more effectively raise additional funds for collections staffing, conservation projects, improved storage, master planning, and other projects that are highlighted as a result of this project.
- **Interpretive Development:** HMM will continue to evaluate the objects in the collection and determine how they can contribute to improved interpretation and programming.

Project Timeline: The Schedule of Completion is based on processing a test batch of 30 FIC objects and speaking with several collections managers who have completed similar projects, and then applying that data to the batch of 9,000 objects that the team plans to address in this phase. Calculations for the research, reconciliation, and processing activities were based on an estimate that approximately 75% of the objects will take an average of 23 minutes to process, while the remaining 25% will require more research and take an average of 2.5 hours to process. Because many of these objects are part of a large group of similar items (like tool handles produced at the mill), research may be completed for tens or occasionally hundreds of objects at the same time, which will shorten the overall research time required. The schedule allows for additional time to create the reports necessary for committee reviews and decision making. The order of buildings allows staff to work in the unheated buildings during the non-winter months and heated buildings during the winters.

Resources: The Found-in-Collections Processing Project's \$280,787 costs include \$140,200 requested from IMLS and \$140,587 in non-federal match, all in-kind. The Museum's in-kind match is comprised of personnel (salary, wages and fringe) totaling \$133,387 and volunteer time valued at \$7,200.

HMM's operating support, including funding for professional staff salaries, is funded primarily by grants from private foundations, including a substantial annual operating grant from the O'Connor Foundation. The foundations that fund HMM's operations are committed to supporting professional stewardship and authentic operation of the site and its collections. IMLS support for this phase of the collections management initiative will position the Museum to leverage future funding for operations (staff salaries) and collections-related projects (including support for Master Planning and a collections and research facility) from funders who have traditionally supported the Museum and from new funders. Part-time Collections Assistants will provide additional project assistance and continue HMM's support of students and emerging museum professionals.

If funded by IMLS, HMM will continue to employ the currently funded Collections Technician to work with staff as a key part of the implementation of the Found-in-Collections Processing Project. The project will also include the addition of part-time Collections Assistants that will utilize the skills of emerging museum professionals from nearby graduate and undergraduate programs, supporting their professional development to strengthen the field. HMM has a five-person full-time senior staff, all of whom will be involved in this project to some degree. The Education and Curatorial Initiatives Manager will dedicate half of her work time to the project, and other full-time staff members will assist with identifying objects, handling large objects and mill machinery, making decisions about FIC objects, and tracking matching funds and budgeting.

Progress Tracking: The project director 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. She will also review

and evaluate processing activities and their resulting PastPerfect records on a periodic basis. Project team members will record their time spent on the project in semi-monthly reports as part of standard HMM accounting practices, and the Finance Manager will track expenses compared to the project budget. The project director will complete interim and final project reports. The project will be considered a success after all of the activities described in the Plan of Work have been completed for 9,000 FIC objects.

Communicating Project Results: HMM will share project results with its members, visitors and professional colleagues. Staff will publish multiple articles about the project in the HMM newsletter; share information with visitors during tours and events; post progress reports on social media like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube; and seek opportunities for presentations at professional meetings and conferences.

Project Results

Project Improvements: Improving collections care and management is one of HMM's highest immediate and long-term priorities. This project will drastically improve HMM's management of its collections. It will also complete more of the necessary steps towards planning for a collections storage and research building in the future, which will provide a safe storage environment and improve the effectiveness of collections care. Completing these project activities will help HMM to continue its progress towards exemplary stewardship and mission fulfillment.

Tangible Products: Tangible products that will come out of the Found-in-Collections Processing Project include: accurate and complete accession and catalog records for 9,000 non-archival objects; education collections objects separated and marked to prevent future confusion with the permanent collection; and interim and final narrative and financial reports for IMLS.

Performance Indicators, Targets and Tracking: The measurement of the project's success will be tangible as existing collections records are enhanced, new records are created, and objects are physically numbered and/or labeled. Although less tangible, the museum's intellectual understanding of its collections will be an equally significant performance indicator when measuring the project's success.

Sustainability: The Found-in-Collections Processing Project, the next phase of HMM's collections management initiative, will enable HMM to create a more well-documented and managed permanent collection. Staff will build on the work completed in this project to continue evaluating collections and plan long-term for a storage and research facility. HMM is committed to sustaining its collections and improving stewardship and will continue to take the steps recommended in the CAP reports. HMM recognizes that in order to continue its collections initiatives, the Museum will need to establish a permanent Collections Technician or comparable position. HMM staff will use the project to further demonstrate the significance of the HMM collections, the scale and importance of collections work, and the effectiveness of a dedicated collections position in contributing to the staff team's achievements. IMLS support for this initiative will strengthen a culture of and commitment to collections management. Funding will position HMM to leverage future funding for operations (including making a stronger case for the impact of additional salary support for professional collections staff) and major collections-related projects (including support for Master Planning and a collections storage and research facility) from funders who have traditionally supported the Museum and from new funders. HMM has demonstrated its capacity to successfully undertake and complete large projects, including its historic power restoration projects and its current IMLS-funded inventory project, and it seeks to serve as a model of how small and rural sites can accomplish major collections projects and embrace best practices.

