



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-30-17-0533-17
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: \$25,001-\$500,000

City of Longmont Longmont Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$148,718
Amount of cost share:	\$194,683

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

The Longmont Museum of Longmont, Colorado, is requesting \$148,718 in grant funding to support the relocation and rehousing of 12,000 objects, which is 75% of its three-dimensional collections. The collections are currently packed and largely inaccessible in a temporary storage facility while a new permanent collections storage facility is planned and built. Funding from IMLS would support one full-time staff position for one year, additional hours for a current staff member, and the purchase of new storage equipment to house the Museum's most vulnerable collections.

The Longmont Museum is a municipal museum that has been collecting since its founding in 1936. More than 12,000 artifacts were housed in an offsite storage facility that became part of a redevelopment project, necessitating a move to temporary storage. The collection was boxed, palletized, and shrink-wrapped, awaiting construction of a permanent facility. The permanent facility is funded, designed, and in the permitting process for construction in 2017. This project will involve the move of the Museum's collections of furniture, vehicles, tools, ceramic and glassware, jewelry, business equipment, appliances, toys, and product packages.

Through this project, the Longmont Museum will significantly upgrade the storage and documentation of its collection. Funds to supplement the Museum's 1.5 FTE collections staff are essential to ensure that the collection is unpacked and the PastPerfect collections database updated with new locations in a timely manner. The purchase of shelving with pullout trays will allow the rehousing of the glassware, toys, jewelry, recreational artifacts, and a portion of the Museum's extensive product package collection. These collections were previously housed in particleboard-based wood laminate cabinets and open shelving, making them vulnerable to damage from physical forces.

Project activities will occur over three years. During the first year, the new facility will be completed, new storage equipment purchased and installed, and palletized and packed collections moved into the space in phases. Year two will focus on unpacking the collections, rehousing them into the new storage equipment, and updating the Museum's PastPerfect database. Year three will complete the unpacking and updating process. Once complete, the Museum will share the results via its newsletter and other media and give tours of the new storage facility.

Completing the move of the Longmont Museum's three-dimensional collections will be the foundation for all future collections management and curatorial work. Once the collections are accessible again, they can be utilized in exhibitions and research, benefiting both internal museum staff and all of the Museum's audiences. The Museum serves more than 55,000 people, primarily from Northern Colorado, each year.

Narrative

1. Project Justification

Project Scope

The Longmont Museum of Longmont, Colorado proposes to rehouse 75% of its three-dimensional collections in a new 15,000 square foot temperature and humidity controlled storage facility. This portion of the Museum's collection is currently housed in a temporary offsite storage warehouse awaiting completion of the new facility. The Longmont Museum is requesting \$148,718 in grant funding to support the relocation and rehousing of these collections.

The move will include approximately 12,000 objects from the collection including furniture, vehicles, tools, ceramic and glassware, jewelry, business equipment, appliances, toys, and product packages. While much of the Museum's storage equipment will be reused in the new facility, 2,557 collections items, including the collections of glassware and ceramics, jewelry, toys, sports equipment and small product packages, require new storage equipment to meet museum standards for collections storage.

Background Information

The Longmont Museum is a municipal museum with a focus on local and regional history as well as changing exhibitions of history, art, and hands-on activities. Founded in 1936 as a museum dedicated to pioneer history, it has expanded its collecting scope to include more recent history and the many peoples that call Longmont home. Longmont is a town of 95,000 people about 30 miles north of Denver, and the Longmont Museum is the only professionally staffed year-round museum in the community.

The Longmont Museum previously housed its collection in a former electric power plant at the southern edge of downtown. IMLS funding in 1998 paid for shelving for collections such as the business equipment and hand tools. The historic power plant, owned by our parent organization the City of Longmont, became a catalyst for redevelopment of its neighborhood, and the City chose to relocate the collections storage into temporary rented space while a new permanent storage facility could be sited and built. The power plant has now been sold to a successful local business. Proceeds from the sale of the building, plus additional City funds, will be used to fund the construction of a new storage facility on City-owned land five miles east of the Museum. The facility will have two sections, a 15,000 square foot Museum storage area, and a 5,000 square foot Police evidence storage area – see the floor plan in Supportingdoc1.pdf. The two sections will share a wall but will be physically separate, with separate HVAC systems, security codes and entrances. The facility is currently in the building permit review process, with construction bids expected to go out in January 2017, and construction starting in March 2017. Estimated construction time for the building is 6 to 9 months.

Prior to the move to temporary storage, the Museum's collections were inventoried, packed in acid-free tissue, and placed in boxes, which were then placed on plastic pallets, shrink-wrapped, and moved to pallet racking in the temporary storage facility. Because the Museum's exhibition schedule featured traveling exhibitions and other non-collections based exhibitions for the next few years, staff determined that the safest and most cost-effective approach was to leave the collection packed until the new permanent facility could be completed. This would allow each item to be subjected to the stress of packing and unpacking only once. The Museum has used this time when the collections have been packed to good effect, entering more than 8,000 catalog records and 2,000 donation records from paper documents into the PastPerfect museum software database.

Need Addressed

The City has committed resources to build and equip the new facility and to move the collections and those pieces of existing storage equipment that are appropriate for reuse. However, the Museum needs additional

Narrative

support to rehouse the collection and to ensure its long-term accessibility. IMLS funds will be used to purchase storage equipment for a significant subset of the collection, as described in more detail below. In addition, funds will pay to increase the Museum's Registrar from half-time to 3/4 time, and to hire a full-time Museum Technician for one year. This added staff is essential to the success of the project. Each of the 12,000 objects to be rehoused must be unpacked, placed into a storage cabinet or shelf, and its location updated in the PastPerfect database. We have found that this process is most successful if staff members work in teams of two with volunteers. The Museum Technician would be fully devoted to this project – his or her consistency is critical to ensure proper documentation. The Registrar will spend up to 75% of her time on this project, and the Curator of History will spend 40% of his time during the year of the move.

Based upon an assessment of conservation need and object significance, the Museum has chosen to prioritize its collections of ceramics and glassware, personal adornment, toys, sports equipment, and product packages for rehousing into new storage equipment. These collections encompass:

- The ceramics and glassware collection, totaling 1115 objects, includes the John Empson collection – Mr. Empson owned the Empson Cannery, one of the largest employers in Longmont in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Upon his retirement, he made a round-the-world trip in 1920, bringing back a collection of Japanese ceramics that were later bequeathed to the City of Longmont.
- The personal adornment, or jewelry, collection, totaling 184 items, was stored in an extremely overcrowded cabinet with drawers that frequently jammed or no longer moved at all. Rehousing this collection will allow the Museum to easily locate appropriate items to accompany exhibitions.
- The Museum's 463 toys include a broad range of toys from a 1908 toy bank given to a family by the local Farmer's National Bank on the birth of a new baby, to a sampling of contemporary toys collected for recent exhibitions.
- Colorado is well-known as an outdoor sports mecca, and the Longmont Museum's collections reflect that interest. The Museum's 145-piece sport equipment collection includes mountain climbing equipment used in the 1970s and 1980s in nearby Rocky Mountain National Park as technical rock climbing became popular with a wide range of people.
- One of the Museum's largest collections is the Paul Schopbach collection of product packages. From 1945 to 1989, Mr. Schopbach was the owner of a local grocery store called the Corner Pantry, which was one of the first groceries in Longmont to carry natural foods. Staff has prioritized rehousing the smaller (4" tall and under) parts of this large collection, as they will be most efficiently and safely stored in drawers. Approximately 650 product packages will be rehoused.

To acquire a collections storage system that meets the highest museum industry standards for quality and performance, the City of Longmont issued a Request for Proposal for a Museum Collections Storage System in October 2016. The RFP includes 100' long embedded compactor rails, a mechanically operated mobile carriage system, and four-post shelving with pull-out trays and hinged doors. IMLS funds will be used to purchase mobile carriages, four-post-shelving units, and pull-out trays to accommodate the highest priority collections described above. The City will provide additional funding for the embedded compactor rails and hinged doors.

The remaining 9,500 objects stored in temporary storage will be moved and unpacked onto existing, relocated shelving and pallet racking. As funding permits, units will be added to the mobile carriage system to replace these pieces of equipment.

Narrative

The new permanent collections storage facility will be the first purpose-built collections storage facility in the Museum's 80-year history. The new facility will have an HVAC system that controls for temperature and humidity, providing a level of environmental stability that has previously only been available in a smaller storage area at the main Museum building. The new facility will both improve the collections environment and dramatically improve access to the collection.

While some storage equipment such as the shelving funded by a 1998 IMLS Conservation Project Support grant, and pallet racking purchased for the temporary warehouse, will be reused, other equipment must be replaced. The glass and ceramics, toys, and sport equipment were housed in wood laminate particleboard cabinets made more than thirty years ago, and not appropriate for Museum storage due to their vulnerability to pests, lack of durability, and potential to damage collections through offgassing. The personal adornment items were housed in an overcrowded metal cabinet with drawers that could no longer slide out smoothly, endangering the objects to deterioration by physical forces. Product packaging was stored on fixed shelving, making for very inefficient storage as space needed to be left to access all objects. Replacement of substandard cabinets was identified as a priority in a 2004 survey by conservator Gina Laurin, and incorporated into the Museum's Conservation Long-Range plan (Supportingdoc2.pdf). This IMLS grant will enable us to rehouse these collections into powder-coated four-post shelving with pull-out drawers, improving the environmental conditions and safe storage of this collection and creating a system of mobile collections equipment that can be added to in the future. Smaller items will be placed within divided trays in each drawer, a system that the Museum has used in the past and will be expanded in the new facility.

Additional staff made possible by this grant will enable us to provide updated, accurate object locations in our PastPerfect database for every object in the new storage facility. Having such information will drastically improve our ability to access objects for research and exhibition. We have already purchased an additional Inventory Manager utility for PastPerfect and will be developing procedures to use it effectively during the unpacking and rehousing process.

Project Beneficiaries

The direct beneficiary of this project is internal Museum staff. Currently the collection is largely inaccessible, stored in boxes on shrink-wrapped pallets on pallet racks. Locating and unpacking an entire pallet to find one object is both extremely time-consuming and requires many objects to be moved, increasing the risk of physical damage. (See Supportingdoc3.pdf – photos of current conditions.) Once this project is completed, the Museum's three-dimensional collection will be accessible again. Having the collections accessible will allow the Museum to share more of its collection with the more than 55,000 people served annually, both in dedicated exhibitions and as supplements to traveling exhibitions that come into the special exhibition gallery.

The design of the new storage facility and the storage layout was led by the Museum's collections staff, Curator of History Erik Mason and Registrar Heather Thorwald. The facility is designed to maximize interior space and ensure collections are accessible.

Advancing the Museum's Strategic Plan

The Longmont Museum's current strategic plan was adopted in March 2016. The plan identifies the construction of a permanent Collections Storage Facility as one of the seven primary goals for the 2016-2019 period. Additional parts of the strategic plan, such as identifying gaps in the current collection and finalizing a long-term collecting plan, require access to the full collection to accomplish. Once this project is completed, those goals would once again be able to be addressed.

Narrative

Addressing IMLS goals

This project addresses both the goals of the IMLS Museums for America grant program and the Collections Stewardship category. This project supports the Museums for America goal of strengthening the ability of the Longmont Museum to serve its public by providing better access to the Museum's collection. It meets the goals of the Collections Stewardship category through rehousing the collections in an improved environment and enhancing the collections database with current location information.

2. Project Work Plan

Specific Activities

This project will involve the relocation of approximately 12,000 museum collection objects from temporary storage to a new permanent storage facility. Performance measures relate to the rehousing and database tracking of these objects. In order to complete this project on time, 175 objects will need to be unpacked and have locations recorded each week in year 1, and 70 objects a week in year 2.

To keep the project on track, staff will prioritize and flag objects as they are unpacked. Those that do not require special care or additional documentation research will be rehoused immediately and their locations updated in PastPerfect. Those requiring special care or additional research will be flagged, placed on separate holding shelves, tracked by spreadsheet, and addressed once the majority of objects have been rehoused. During Year Three of the project, the Registrar will place special focus on addressing objects that require exceptional care or additional research. We have recently inventoried our furniture and textile collections, and our results show that past accessioning practices were, on the whole, consistently implemented. Therefore, we anticipate only a small percentage of objects requiring extra research to determine their status.

The following indicators and outcomes have been established for this project:

Indicator: The number of objects with current locations in PastPerfect

Data Source: PastPerfect report showing objects with an inventory date since the last collections move

Target Outcome: By the end of the project, the percentage of objects with a current location will increase from 19% to 75%.

Indicator: The number of objects housed in easily-accessible drawers

Data source: PastPerfect report on objects housed in new storage equipment

Target Outcome: By the end of the project, the number of objects accessible in drawers will increase from 0 to 2,500.

Project Risks

Several risks exist within this project. Construction delays could impact the timing of project completion. Fortunately, our current temporary storage lease has flexibility on its end date, although we wish to be out as soon as reasonably possible to save in rental costs. Moving artifacts carries a level of risk, which is partially mitigated by the system of packing, palletizing and shrink-wrapping the boxed collections. The primary project staff are also experienced in collections moves, and will be involved throughout the moving process. Unpacking collections is also potentially risky – having teams of two, pairing professional staff with volunteers, limits the risk here as well.

Narrative

Project Personnel

This project will be led by two Longmont Museum staff, each of whom has many years of experience in museums, including multiple collections rehousing projects.

Curator of History Erik Mason will be the project director. He will spend 40% of his time in year 1 and 25% in years 2 and 3 on the project. A graduate of the Cooperstown Graduate Program in History Museum Studies, he is responsible for the management, preservation, and care of all of the Longmont Museum’s collections. He has served as Project Director on two previous IMLS funded projects, a 2002 Conservation Project Support grant to rehouse the Museum’s textile, doll, and archival collections, and a 2004 Museums for America grant to create a core history exhibition at the Longmont Museum. He has been with the Longmont Museum for 20 years and has been involved with three major collections moves during that time. His responsibility on this project would be overall project oversight, budget and financial tracking, and volunteer management.

Museum Registrar Heather Thorwald has been with the Longmont Museum for 1½ years, and previously was the Registrar at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science (DMNS) for ten years. At the DMNS she was a key part of the team that planned the Avenir Collections Center and Science and Collections Initiative, a \$10 million project to rehouse 1.4 million objects. Her contributions to the project included coordinating data collection for a collection volume assessment and an IMLS-funded risk assessment to inform building design, developing move protocols and procedures, procuring move equipment, and tracking storage equipment orders. Her experience on that collections planning and rehousing project will be essential in making this project a success. Her position is half-time with the Longmont Museum. As part of the grant, her time would increase to ¾ for the first two years of the project. She will spend 75% of her time in year 1, 60% of her time in year 2, and 40% of her time in year 3 on the project. She would provide consistency in the planning and implementation of the project.

Grant-funded Museum Technician This position will be filled through an open hiring process in 2018. In past grant projects, we have found that this is an excellent position for an emerging museum professional who gains valuable experience in the collections field. The Museum Technician will be responsible for unpacking objects, storing them in the new facility, and updating the storage locations in PastPerfect.

Lodestone Architecture is the design firm for the new storage facility, and Jeff VanSambeek is the project architect. Lodestone is a local firm that the Museum has been working with for the last 18 months to ensure that this project meets museum standards for security, climate control, and flexible space. They have experience in many projects of this size. The general contractor will be chosen through a bidding process in early 2017.

Project timeline

Pre-Grant activities	
October 25, 2016	Request for Proposal issued for Museum Collection Storage System
January 3, 2017	Vendor selected for Museum Collection Storage System
January 9, 2017	Storage Facility construction documents sent out for bid
February 15, 2017	Construction bid awarded
March 15, 2017	Construction work begins
September 2017	Embedded rails for compactor system installed in storage facility
Year 1	
October 1, 2017	Start of grant
December 15, 2017	Completion of construction of storage facility. Our architect estimates

Narrative

	construction of the building, a simple concrete shell with minimal interior finishes, will take 6 months. We have allowed 9 months to be safe.
December 2017	Vendor installs compactors and new storage equipment in new facility
January-February 2018	Phase I of the collections move: Professional movers move all shrink-wrapped and palletized boxes containing small artifacts from pallet racking in temporary storage to staging in new facility
March 2018	Contractors dismantle pallet racking dismantled in temporary storage and reinstall it in new facility
March 1, 2018	Grant-funded Museum Technician hired
March 2018 – September 2018	Unpacking, prioritizing and flagging of objects and updating of PastPerfect database by Museum Technician, Curator, Registrar and volunteers
April-May 2018	Phase II of collections move: Professional movers wrap and move furniture and other large artifacts from temporary storage to pallet rack and staging area in new facility
June 2018	Contractors remove all remaining shelving and equipment from temporary storage and reinstall in new facility
Year 2	
October 2018 – February 2019	Unpacking, prioritizing, and flagging of objects and updating of database continues by Museum Technician, Curator, Registrar and volunteers
February 28, 2019	Museum Technician funding ends
May 2019	Public tour of collections storage facility
March – Sept 2019	Flagged objects researched and rehoused by Curator, Registrar and volunteers.
Year 3	
October 2019-Sept 2020	Research, rehousing and updating of database by Curator, Registrar, and volunteers
September 30, 2020	Grant period ends

Financial, Personnel, and Other Resources

The City of Longmont is funding the construction of the storage facility, the installation of the compact storage rails, the move of the collection, and a portion of the storage equipment costs. IMLS support is crucial to ensuring that the museum has sufficient museum quality storage equipment to house its collection, and that the collection is unpacked, rehoused, and documented within the project timeline.

As part of the grant, the Museum will hire a Museum Technician for one year. Based on the Longmont Museum's last two IMLS-funded collections rehousing projects, having a dedicated staff member on the project is vitally important. The Technician will devote 100% of their time to ensuring that the project is completed. With a small staff (1.5 FTE in collections), hiring the Museum Technician will allow the Museum's regular program of exhibitions and research to continue during the move.

Volunteers are also an important part of this project. The Museum currently has sixteen volunteers in its collections area, and receives inquiries from people interested in volunteering on a regular basis. We plan to pair volunteers with staff for the unpacking and rehousing part of the project.

Narrative

Tracking Progress

Once the collections are moved to the new storage facility, Registrar, Curator, and Museum Tech will meet weekly for the first two months to review progress and remove bottlenecks. Once the process is established, we will move to biweekly review meetings. Using the PastPerfect Inventory Manager module will allow us to track the progress of rehousing and run reports on how many objects were rehoused since the last review, to make sure that the project stays on track.

Sharing Results

Results of this project will be shared via the Museum's quarterly newsletter. When the project is complete, we will host a public tour of the storage facility. It will also be available for tours to colleagues and open to qualified material culture researchers. Tours of the new collections storage facility will also be an ongoing benefit of higher levels of Museum membership.

3. Project Results

Moving and rehousing the Museum's three-dimensional collections will dramatically improve their care and management. The new storage equipment will be a vast improvement over the wood laminate and particleboard cabinets with fixed shelves used previously. Use of drawers rather than fixed shelving will allow the collections to be accessed more easily and stored more efficiently.

The Museum will purchase four-post shelving units with pull-out trays on mechanically operated mobile carriages. The new storage facility will have rails for a compact storage system laid into the floor, allowing the addition of more compactor units replacing static shelving to improve storage efficiency in the future.

Tangible Products

The Museum's PastPerfect collections management database will be updated to reflect the new storage locations. Reports on the progress of this project will appear in the Museum's quarterly newsletter. In addition, staff will give a public tour once the facility is operational, and will give tours to colleagues as requested.

The primary tangible benefit of this project will be a dramatic improvement in the environmental conditions of the collections storage, and an even more profound shift in the ability of the Museum to access its collection. Moving the collection from palletized shrink-wrapped boxes stored on pallet racks to easily accessible pull-out drawers will allow the Museum to see and assess its collection again. After more than 75 years of collecting, the Museum's Strategic Plan identified the need to focus and refine the collections. Work on that project has progressed, but without access to the collections themselves, it can only go so far.

Sustaining project benefits

The new collections storage facility will be a permanent home for the Museum's collections. Having all the collections in proper and accessible storage will allow for a thorough assessment of the condition and quality of the collection and will make possible future projects, such as photo documentation and collection research. This project will be the foundation for the Longmont Museum's collections management efforts for the future.

IMLS funding for this project will enable us to install mobile collections storage equipment, which we can add to in the future as our collection grows, allowing us to use our new facility efficiently. Improved access will allow us to evaluate our collections to determine future priorities for acquisition, conservation treatment, exhibition, and deaccession.

