



## **Museums Empowered**

Sample Application MA-40-17-0672-17

Project Category: Diversity & Inclusion

Funding Level: \$25,001-\$250,000

### **Shedd Aquarium Chicago, IL**

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$246,981
Amount of cost share:	\$247,062

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

**ABSTRACT***Here, There and Everywhere: Embracing Diversity and Inclusion at Shedd Aquarium*

When it opened its doors in 1930, John G. Shedd Aquarium brought to Chicago “the greatest variety of sea life under one roof.” With nearly 2 million annual guests and a collection of over 32,000 animals, the aquarium remains today a major cultural attraction with a commitment to conservation, education and the highest level of animal care. But there is a renewed urgency to our work. Mounting pressures on the aquatic world threaten to upend the health and diversity of the life we hold dear, spurring Shedd to maximize our ability to mobilize *all* audiences in support of our mission.

The proposed two-year project, “Here, There and Everywhere: Embracing Diversity and Inclusion at Shedd Aquarium,” will build our capacity to successfully engage diverse communities with our mission through a demonstrated increase in cultural competency for Shedd staff and volunteers. Through a multi-departmental and integrated suite of professional development opportunities, the project will ensure our commitment to diversity and inclusion is effective and sustainable. Shedd will draw from our history serving a diverse audience, including our recent Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative that addressed the needs of people with disabilities, and use as a guidepost the three priority areas of the aquarium’s new strategic plan: 1.) **Here**: Making an Impact Onsite; 2.) **There**: In the Chicago Community and Out in Nature; and 3.) **Everywhere**: In the Digital-virtual World. In addition, we are informed by the museum community’s ongoing awareness of the importance of cultural sensitivity as evidenced by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ 2016 “Enhancing Diversity and Inclusion” report and other sources.

Project activities follow a Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Roadmap, inspired by the strategic plan, which outlines Shedd’s plan to build cultural competencies across the institution through community input and consultant-led professional development:

- **Here**: Creating a Welcoming Environment at Shedd – provide Shedd’s leadership, staff and volunteers the knowledge and tools needed to build a culturally sensitive and inclusive culture at Shedd as well as inclusive exhibit and program experiences for guests.
- **There**: Fostering Authentic Relationships in the Chicago Community – facilitate multi-issue listening sessions to inform our practice in a variety of arenas, including offsite community engagements.
- **Everywhere**: Adopting Culturally Sensitive and Inclusive Practices in the Digital-virtual World – enhance our website, social media and public relations strategies.

Our guests, conservation stakeholders and online community will benefit from Shedd staff and volunteer participation in diversity, equity and inclusion professional development. The project will primarily focus on local audiences: Shedd sits in the heart of Chicago, a city of neighborhoods representative of the diversity of the nation. Many have found their place in the city, including vibrant African American, Hispanic, Latino, Asian, Polish, Indian and LGBTQ communities. Project outcomes will directly affect the ability of Shedd staff and volunteers across the institution to best serve these and other audiences, including people with disabilities, providing resources, tools and strategies to promote cultural literacy. Measures of success for the project are two-fold: 1.) Staff and volunteers demonstrate an increase in knowledge, familiarity, comfort and ability to serve diverse audiences at Shedd, in the community and in the digital-virtual world and 2.) a Shedd workforce that better reflects this diversity. Evaluation findings, best practices and lessons learned will be shared with peer zoos and aquariums as well as the broader museum field.

## NARRATIVE

### Project Justification

#### Proposed project

Shedd Aquarium is, above all else, a celebration of the rich diversity of life found in our planet's aquatic ecosystems. This diversity of life is encountered in our permanent galleries, special exhibits and experiences, showcasing animals from great oceans and vast river systems to those who live in intimate ponds, creeks and ephemeral pools. Mirroring our animal diversity, the project, "Here, There and Everywhere: Embracing Diversity and Inclusion at Shedd Aquarium," will build our capacity to best serve the audiences we currently – and hope to – reach, providing a welcoming environment at Shedd, a respectful and mutually-beneficial relationship with Chicago's diverse communities, and an accessible and engaging presence in the digital space.

The project will use as a guidepost the three priority areas of Shedd's new strategic plan<sup>1</sup>: 1.) Here: How Shedd will Make an Impact Onsite; 2.) There: In the Chicago Community and Out in Nature; and 3.) Everywhere: In the Digital-virtual World. From these, we derived a Diversity and Inclusion Professional Development Roadmap (Supporting Document 1) that outlines Shedd's plan to build cultural competencies across the institution through previously gained knowledge, community input and consultant-led professional development. The roadmap consists of three themes: 1.) **Here: Creating a Welcoming Environment at Shedd** – provide Shedd's leadership, staff and volunteers with the tools needed to build a culturally sensitive and inclusive culture at Shedd as well as inclusive exhibit and program experiences for guests; 2.) **There: Fostering Authentic Relationships in the Chicago Community** – facilitate multi-issue listening sessions to inform our practice in a variety of arenas, including offsite; and 3.) **Everywhere: Adopting Inclusive Practices in the Digital-virtual World** – enhance our website, social media and public relations presence.

Professional development opportunities will increase general understanding of diversity and inclusion across Shedd and provide specific skills to embed diversity and inclusion in everyday practice. Activities include train-the-facilitator sessions for staff delivering Shedd-wide diversity and inclusion training; review of HR practices; community focus groups; an accessibility program audit; and program summits for consultants and project leads to ensure a cohesive, integrated approach to project activities and outcomes.

#### Need the project will address and how it was identified

Our need to respond, engage and mobilize ever-changing audiences is best articulated in a powerful Inluseum blog post by Porchia Moore, an advocate for inclusion in the museum world, that states, "...we are the cultural gatekeepers. It matters who enters our gates. It matters what is inside our gates. It matters how our gates are perceived. No one culture and their cultural values and heritage should dominate the other. A young black teen living in Ohio or a middle-aged Iranian woman residing in Texas should see museums as theirs. They should feel that the museum has something powerful, compelling, and transformative to offer."

"But there is a larger truth," Moore continues. "Genuine racial inclusion can and must come soon or museums will find themselves in a precarious position. Why? Because increasingly, there is no such thing as a racial minority. In fact, our racial identities are becoming more complex and multiracial as a multitude of racial groups are growing in numbers across the country."<sup>2</sup> Continued demographic shifts in the U.S. show a more diverse population. Ethnicity shifts alone suggests that, by 2060, the term "minority" as defined today may need redefining.<sup>3</sup> The Center for the Future of Museums reports that of the core group of museum visitors,

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<sup>1</sup> The framework for Shedd Aquarium's new strategic plan was approved by the Board of Trustees in March 2017. The finalized plan with refined goals, objectives and initiatives will be reviewed by the Board in early May 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Moore, Porchia. "The Danger of the 'D' Word: Museums and Diversity." *The Inluseum*, 20 Jan. 2014.

<sup>3</sup> *Enhancing Diversity & Inclusion in AZA Zoos and Aquariums*. Association of Zoos & Aquariums, The Diversity Committee. 2016.

only nine percent are minorities. As Moore asks, “How can we increase these numbers so that they mirror the racial compositions of our communities?”<sup>2</sup> AZA’s 2016 report, “Enhancing Diversity & Inclusion in AZA Zoos and Aquariums,” (Supporting Document 2) helps provide guidance to Moore’s question. The study recommends a comprehensive diversity and inclusion effort where two of the study’s focus areas align with our project: *Audience* - guests, members and program participants and *Workforce* - volunteers and paid employees.<sup>3</sup> We are also inspired by AAM’s Center for the Future of Museums’ “Trendswatch 2016” report whose theme, as stated in the introduction by Elizabeth Merritt, founding member of the Center, “...revolves in some way around identity. How do I experience the world and empathize what it’s like for other people?”<sup>4</sup>

### Who will benefit from the project

The project will lead us from desiring to be diverse, equitable and inclusive, both in culture and practice, to beginning our journey of a diverse, equitable and inclusive cultural organization. By building capacity, this will become part of our DNA, with a vision that each new generation of the Shedd family will sustain and grow the effort, responding to the ever-evolving nature of the public we serve. To this end, two groups will benefit from the project. First, Shedd staff and volunteers will glean the best of what effective, multi-disciplinary professional development can offer—elevated performance at work, personal development and fulfillment, and skillsets that are of value beyond Shedd. Second, our audiences, with a focus locally, will benefit: Shedd sits in the heart of Chicago, a city of diverse neighborhoods and people. Along with racial, ethnic and socioeconomic diversity, others have also found their place in Chicago, including the LGBTQ community, one of the largest in the country. In addition, the project will serve people with disabilities. According to the 2000 Census, over 600,000 Chicago residents reported having a disability. This project will also be informed by – and expand – our Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative (Supporting Document 3).

A commitment to diversity and awareness for audiences has often been thought of as merely the right thing to do.<sup>3</sup> We now need to engage all audiences through our mission – “Sparking compassion, curiosity and conservation for the aquatic animal world, and vision – “A world thriving with aquatic life sustained by people who love, understand and protect it,” because *that* is the right thing to do.

### Advancing Shedd Aquarium’s strategic plan

Along with the link to Shedd’s new strategic plan’s framework of Here, There and Everywhere, specific strategic plan goals, objectives and initiatives are directly related to the project. These include *removing barriers* to engage new audiences, *forge new community partners* for offsite growth initiatives, *mirror our community* by designing experiences and offerings to be welcoming and culturally relevant, *create learning experiences in the community* through outpost experiences and *ensure thriving local waters* through the awareness and actions of Chicagoland residents.

A community engagement strategy has also begun to emerge from the plan with steps that include identifying and cultivating relationships, utilizing community input, assessing current practices and programs, stewarding community partnerships, co-develop new practices and programs and widening engagement with communities throughout Chicagoland.

### Addressing the goals of the special initiative

The project addresses the following goals of the initiative: to enhance staff skills to ensure the highest standards in all aspects of museum operations; to create opportunities to encourage a more inclusive and

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<sup>4</sup> *TrendsWatch 2016*. Center for the Future of Museums. 2016.

diverse museum professional/volunteer; and to create a nation of learners by offering rich, authentic content, providing learning experiences for *everyone*. Most importantly, the project will engage community stakeholders and build staff capacity “to provide inclusive services to people of diverse geographic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and to individuals with disabilities.” Through the project, Shedd will help “build the next generation of museum professionals,” instilling a diversity and inclusion ethic applicable to wherever their careers may take them.

## Project Work Plan

### Specific activities

#### ***Here: Creating a Welcoming Environment at Shedd***

**1. Conscious Inclusion Education.** Through a train-the-facilitator program, select HR staff will learn how to deliver “Conscious Inclusion” sessions to staff, volunteers and leadership. Over the course of the project, approximately 350 full-time employees and 700 volunteers will be able to participate in sessions offered by six Shedd facilitators. Competencies addressed will include: 1.) communicate authentically – articulate the value of diversity and inclusion at all levels; 2.) embrace differences – actively seek out and include perspectives that are different from my own; and 3.) demonstrate empathy – work to build trusting relationships (Supporting Document 4). For the program, Shedd will again utilize The Kaleidoscope Group, a diversity and inclusion consulting firm and certified minority organization enterprise located in Chicago (Supporting Document 5).

**2. Inclusive Teams Strategy.** An extension of “Conscious Inclusion,” this training, led by Kaleidoscope, will target leadership-level staff, such as vice presidents and directors, who in turn will bring back key learnings to their respective department personnel. Sessions include: “Setting the Stage for an Inclusive Team” to understand the importance of engaging unique backgrounds/experiences; “Valuing the Differences” to identify common and unique team member values; “Living the Values” to understand the intersection of values, behaviors and unique skills; and “Inclusive Teams in Action” to sustain the team’s culture of inclusion.

**3. Human Resources Diversity and Inclusion Practices.** Kaleidoscope will help Shedd build a diverse workplace through culturally sensitive recruitment, hiring and retention. Through the trainings, Shedd will better understand the following types of diversity in the workplace: religious, political beliefs, gender, ethnicity, education, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation and geographic location. The effort will include a HR needs assessment; talent acquisition webinar series, managing biases to ensure fairness in compensation and benefits; and talent development to build a diverse pipeline.

**4. Universal Design Training for the Exhibit Team.** With ADA, many museums improved the accessibility of their facilities. Even so, individuals with disabilities lag behind in participation in museum experiences.<sup>5</sup> Shedd has a pending IMLS submission titled, “Shedd for All: A Model for Enhancing Accessibility and Inclusion” that includes input from consultants and the disability community to drive accessibility efforts aquarium-wide. In this proposal, we have added a second wave of professional development beginning April 2018 (after the conclusion of the pending project) to build on this effort. The training will be facilitated by the Institute for Human Centered Design. Located in Boston, the Institute is “committed to advancing the role of design in expanding opportunity and enhancing experience for people of all ages and abilities through excellence in design” (Supporting Document 6). Shedd has worked previously with the group as part of the aquarium’s Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative.

**5. Program Accessibility Audit:** The Institute for Human Centered Design will conduct an audit of programs and attendant policies and procedures. The audit will include one trip to Shedd, a review of all

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<sup>5</sup> Rappolt-Schlichtmann, Gabrielle and Samantha G. Daley. “Providing Access to Engagement in Learning: The Potential of Universal Design for Learning in Museum Design.” *Curator: The Museum Journal*, vol. 56, no. 3, July 2013, pp. 307-321.

programs on our website and from museum-provided information and interviews with 20 staff and volunteers. They will analyze findings then provide a comprehensive report.

**6. Diversity and Inclusion Training for Program-related staff.** A subset of the “Conscious Inclusion” facilitation cited above, Shedd will offer targeted train-the-facilitator sessions for program-related staff. Staff from Guest Engagement (overseeing a corps of interpretive exhibit volunteers), Guest Experience (over 150 staff providing a variety of services, from admissions, membership and wayfinding to aquatic presentations), Learning Programs (implementing onsite, in the field and online educational opportunities for students and teachers) and Conservation Programs and Partnerships (leading local stewardship and citizen science efforts for a variety of audiences) will participate in the trainings.

### ***There: Fostering Authentic Relationships in the Chicago Community***

**1. Community Focus Groups.** Listening sessions are critical to the project’s success and will inform all other activities. The focus groups will represent a cross-section of Chicagoland’s communities, including but not limited to African American, Latino, Asian, Polish, Indian, LGBTQ and people with disabilities. The African American and Latino communities will be a particular focus as they represent a large percentage of Chicagoland’s population but are under-represented in our visitorship<sup>6</sup>. The audience research and consulting firm The Garibay Group will organize and implement the focus groups utilizing their experience in developing strategies to more effectively reach visitors through enriching environments and programs. The Garibay Group will use a recruitment firm and additional networks for recruiting participants and they will provide the study design planning and development, instrument development, group moderation, data analysis, report writing and presentations and debriefs with the team. Topics covered can include community access programs, communities and conservation, barriers to visitation and the relevance of Shedd’s.

**2. Engaging a Diverse Community of Stewards.** Shedd implements a stewardship program, Great Lakes Action Days (GLADs), that invites a variety of groups and the general public to participate in activities such as local beach clean-ups, invasive plant removal and citizen science projects along Lake Michigan’s shores and the areas inland waters. Community organizations, often serving diverse audiences, participate in GLADs. Conservation staff will participate in programs to increase their ability to work with diverse audiences as well as work with the Garibay Group to include stewardship as part of the focus group discussions.

### ***Everywhere: Adopting Inclusive Practices in the Digital-virtual World***

**1. Web Accessibility Training.** With web accessibility, people with disabilities (including people with visual, auditory, physical, speech, cognitive and neurological disabilities) can perceive, understand and navigate the web. Web accessibility also benefits others, including older people. Currently most websites and web software have accessibility barriers that make it difficult or impossible for many people with disabilities to use.<sup>7</sup> Shedd Aquarium has a rich presence in the digital-virtual world, including nearly 3 million visitors to our website. Through our Accessibility and Inclusion Initiative, we have identified the changes we need to make but do not have the staff capacity to implement them.

With the project, Shedd developers will gain knowledge and hands-on training to understand and apply accessibility requirements for websites, web applications, browsers, media players, assistive technologies and other technology tools to enhance the guest experience. This would be accomplished through side-by-side

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<sup>6</sup> The Black/African American population in Chicago is 33%; Shedd visitors are comprised of 11%. The Hispanic/Latino population in Chicago is 29%; Shedd visitors are comprised of 22%. There is even a higher discrepancy between these groups and Shedd’s workforce.

<sup>7</sup> *Introduction to Web Accessibility.* World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), Sept. 2015.

development of technology solutions with a consultant (to be identified at the outset of the project) in the field of technology accessibility. In the process, the consultant will offer mentoring and design and code feedback and review the use of authoring and evaluation tools. We will utilize principles of Accessible and Universal Design to include such items as labeling and markup, formatting, linking and displaying.

**2. *Building Effective Cross-Cultural Communications Training.*** Shedd's PR and Communications team supports integrated strategic priorities. An emphasis is placed on practices that 1.) enhance and protect the institution's public image and 2.) reinforce the significance and relevancy of Shedd while advancing the aquarium's mission through strategic partnerships, earned media, influencer relations and digital/social media strategies. The team works closely with the aquarium's in-house Brand agency and Marketing team to ensure their work is in alignment. With Shedd's broad reach and the importance of our messages, a mission-based presence outside our doors has to be relevant and culturally sensitive. It is necessary for the team to develop the skills to communicate effectively to a wide variety of audiences. The team will work with PACO Collective, a leading cross-cultural agency and expert in helping organizations "transcend cultural boundaries in today's 'minority majority' market." PACO Collective will provide strategic counsel, data and relevant information to help inform our knowledge, skills and abilities to deliver communications and marketing initiatives founded in culturally specific values, attitudes, behaviors, insights and influences.

Other project activities include professional development (led by the Garibay Group) for Shedd's in-house Audience Research and Evaluation team. As we serve more diverse audiences, it is important that we build our capacity to accurately gauge success. The training will cover topics such as culturally responsive evaluation practices, designing and implementing research and evaluation studies with diverse audiences and data collection with diverse or sensitive populations. In addition, the project will include program summits, conference attendance to gain knowledge and share project best practices and lessons learned (Supporting Document 7), and travel for animal care staff to visit institutions that incorporate accessibility practices.

### Evaluation and performance measures

Measures of success for the project are two-fold: 1.) Staff and volunteers demonstrate an increase in knowledge, familiarity, comfort and ability to serve diverse audiences at Shedd, in the community and in the digital-virtual world; and 2.) Moving towards a Shedd workforce that mirrors this diversity. Evaluation findings, best practices and lessons learned will be shared with peer zoos and aquariums as well as the broader museum field. Performance measures include documented change in baseline understanding of diversity and inclusion and its relevance to our guests' experience with Shedd; documented adjustments to exhibit design, program delivery and guest interactions taking into account the diverse needs of audiences; and a demonstrated improvement over baseline for culturally sensitive HR practices and external communications.

### Risks to the project

The project's success hinges on our ability to keep lines of communication open and productive and coordinate staff time (balanced with their primary roles for the aquarium) to participate in the professional development opportunities offered. With the complexity and multi-departmental nature of the project, along with the utilization of a variety of consultants, there is a risk of a splintered and diluted effort. This is addressed by a detailed schedule of completion; a strong link with the aquarium's new strategic plan, which helps ensure accountability at the highest institutional level; and project summits, both inaugural and periodic, with all external and at-Shedd stakeholders. Shedd's team-based culture will also contribute to the project's success.

### Planning, implementing and managing the project

Key staff will oversee project planning and implementation, working with both consultants and the project's multi-departmental core team written into the grant budget. Each of the key project personnel brings a unique set of skills and experiences to this process. Nancy Anshel, Senior Vice President of Human Resources and the project's PI, has a long history implementing diversity initiatives at Shedd; John Buranosky, Senior Director of Training and Development, moved from a guest services leadership role to HR and brings a deep knowledge of Shedd's employee and volunteer base; Jo-Elle Mogerman, Vice President of Learning and Community, serves as the chair of AZA's Diversity Committee and, as a recent hire at Shedd, offers new perspectives and objectivity; and Lynn Walsh, Manager of Accessibility and Inclusion, has been a key driver for accessibility improvements in our exhibits and programs. She will continue to offer disability awareness, etiquette and people-first language training as well as coordinate accessibility guest speakers.

### Sequence of activities

Over the course of the project, Shedd will: 1.) **Co-develop** a professional development suite with consultants; 2.) **Implement** professional development trainings and community focus groups; and 3.) **Put into practice** cultural competencies in all aspects of Shedd's work. In general, co-developing professional development will take place the first four months of the grant, October 2017 through January 2018; implementation of professional development will take place February 2018 through January 2019; and putting cultural competencies into practice will begin June 2018 through the project's completion in September 2019. Project summits with consultants and project staff will take place approximately twice a year: October 2017, May 2018, December 2018 and July 2019.

### Financial, personnel and other resources

Project costs for the two-year project include: 1.) **Salaries and Wages:** \$91,010 for Shedd staff that will oversee PD opportunities (i.e., coordinate with consultants and staff that will receive training). Departments represented include HR, Planning and Design, Learning, Guest Experience, Guest Engagement, PR and Communications, Technology, Conservation and Audience Research and Evaluation; 2.) **Fringe Benefits:** \$27,430 at 30 percent full-time staff; 3.) **Travel:** \$21,695 for conferences including AAM, AZA, CREA (Center for Culturally Responsive Evaluation and Assessment), LEAD (Leadership in Arts and Disability) and SHRM (Society for Human Resource Management). Travel also includes animal care staff visiting facilities that offer animal encounter experiences for people with disabilities; 4.) **Contracts and Subawards:** \$306,912 for the Kaleidoscope Group, Garibay Group, Institute for Human Centered Design, PACO Collective and a web design group/technology accessibility consultant (TBD); 5.) **Other:** \$5,515 for AAM, AZA, CREA and LEAD conference registration; and 6.) **Indirect Costs:** \$45,255 at a Shedd chosen rate of 10 percent. **Total Costs:** \$497,817.

### Tracking progress and sharing project results

Each consultant and department lead will track progress by creating baseline measures and expected measures above baseline, assessing performance and impact, and coalescing findings across the project's multiple activities. The Audience Research and Evaluation team, through their normal course of work, will track guest satisfaction. Internally, Shedd will share lessons learned and celebrate successes through accessibility fairs, staff presentations and all-staff town halls. Project results will be shared with peers in the museum field as well as at conferences including AAM, AZA, CREA, LEAD and SHRM. Sharing results can also happen through publications such as the Visitor Studies Association Journal and dialogue with our Museums in Park partners, which include Adler Planetarium, The Art Institute of Chicago, DuSable Museum of African American History, the Field Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of Mexican Art. We can also

utilize aquarium blog posts and website content to share our efforts online with Shedd audiences. Most importantly, we will share our journey with the communities we serve.

## Project Results

### Reporting on performance measures

Working with the project's consultants, Shedd will report on performance measures as they relate to the following IMLS goal selected: Learning: Train and develop museum and library professionals. Performance measures are tied back to cultural competencies and behaviors:

- Can staff/volunteers articulate the value of diversity and inclusion?
- Can staff/volunteers demonstrate embracing differences?
- Can staff/volunteers identify ways they can incorporate diversity and inclusion in their role at Shedd?
- Do programmers have an increased ability to serve the needs of all audiences?
- Do Shedd practices, both internal and outward facing, demonstrate cultural sensitivity?

### Intended results and change in knowledge, skills and attitudes

The project's intended results are echoed by AZA's Enhancing Diversity: A Resource Guide<sup>8</sup> toolkit, which outlines steps to achieve diversity and inclusion. Markers of success include the ability to understand where Shedd is in our "Diversity and Inclusion" journey and the motivation to continue the journey; identify a community's diversity and respond to their individualized needs through changes in practice; and the ability to continually develop and implement staff diversity and awareness training, coupled with HR practices, to ensure a diverse staff and volunteer base and a diversity, equity and inclusion culture at Shedd. There are two specific aspects to the project's intended results: *changes in knowledge and attitudes for Shedd staff, volunteers and leadership* – understanding, embracing and celebrating difference; and *skill sets that can be applied to different aspects of Shedd's business*—from guest interactions to exhibit and program design and delivery to external communications.

### Tangible products and sustaining project benefits

Tangible products for the project include: 1.) training materials and assessment tools for "Conscious Inclusion" sessions, as well as programmer-specific diversity and inclusion workshops; 2.) community focus group data analysis and report; 3.) a diversity and inclusion HR manual; 4.) a detailed audit of Shedd's programs and experiences; 5.) program, exhibit, external communications and evaluation standards of practice that draw upon shared cultural competencies; and 6.) an accessibility infrastructure for Shedd's website (and other digital applications). To sustain project benefits, we have incorporated train-the-facilitator components into the professional development plan. Cultural competencies for staff and volunteers (through a Shedd-wide culture of diversity, equity and inclusion and department-specific skill sets) will be a part of day-to-day business and will live on beyond the grant period. Key learnings from the project may inspire programs and initiatives yet to be determined, as well as a formalized diversity, equity and inclusion "business case" for Shedd. The project's strong connection to the new seven-year strategic plan, guarantees that newly honed cultural competencies will be operationalized.

Shedd Aquarium thanks IMLS for their consideration of our proposal, which will deepen our ability to serve all audiences in an authentic, meaningful and respectful way.

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<sup>8</sup> *Enhancing Diversity: A Resource Guide*. Association of Zoos & Aquariums.



