



Museums Empowered

Sample Application MA-41-17-0644-17
Project Category: Organizational Management
Funding Level: \$5,000 - \$25,001

Whitney Plantation Museum Edgard, LA

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$24,976
Amount of cost share:	\$0

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

ABSTRACT

Goal: Build the Capacity of The Whitney Institute and Support its Long-Term Sustainability

Lead Applicant: The Whitney Institute, a new 501(c)3 nonprofit emerging from the Whitney Plantation, is focused on telling the accurate story of slavery through museum tours, education and research.

Project Manager: Ashley Rogers, Director of Museum Operations, Whitney Institute

Partners:

- Turry M. Flucker, Consultant for Strategic Plan (Museum Expertise)
- ResourceWorks, LLC, Consulting Firm for Capacity Building: Governance, Finance and Fundraising (Lisa M. Kaichen and Alicia P. Oliver, ResourceWorks Consultants)
- American Alliance for State and Local History for Data Analysis/*Visitors Count!*

Time frame: December 1, 2017 – November 30, 2018 (one year)

Need: The Whitney Institute is a new 501(c)3 organization that manages the Whitney Plantation. It also is developing a research library and a range of educational programs. Because of the plantation's unique niche – a focus on slavery and its impact on people, institutions and culture – it has attracted thousands of visitors from across the globe. Utilization has exceeded expectations by tens of thousands -- before the organization's foundational infrastructure has been formed. It is imperative that we develop a strategic plan, put organizational policies and practices in place, and glean information about the people we are serving as a crucial tool for long-range planning.

Activities:

1. **Develop a Strategic Plan** to design a process to become accredited, with focus on *aligning with AAM standards* for Education and Interpretation; -Collections, Care and Stewardship; Facilities and Risk Management, Public Trust and Accountability, Mission and Objectives and Diversity and Inclusion.
Deliverables: stakeholder interviews and research, series of 6 workshops, strategic plan
2. **Organizational Capacity Building** (*based on BBB Standards for Charity Accountability*)
 - Review current policies and procedures related to governance, finance, fundraising and
 - Create templates and procedures manuals as indicated
 - Coach and facilitate staff professional development
 - Present three on-site workshops for board and staff.
3. **Data Collection and Analysis of Visitor Experience and Needs**
Purchase and implement the *Visitors Count! Data Collection and Analysis Program* as well as the *Kiosk Pro* software and equipment in order to assess visitor experience and needs that will inform the strategic plan. At present, The Whitney relies on social media reviews.

Who will benefit: Museum board, management and staff, researchers, and ultimately all visitors to a professional museum that implements best practices and has a roadmap to future American Alliance of Museums accreditation.

NARRATIVE

1. Project Justification

What do you propose to do?

We plan to use this funding to accomplish three goals for The Whitney Institute, which operates The Whitney Plantation, a museum located along the Mississippi River less than an hour from New Orleans.

- **Prepare a realistic, actionable strategic plan with measurable outcomes, and a continuous improvement plan based on the American Association of Museums (AAM) standards for museum operations;**
- **Develop policies, procedures and best practices in nonprofit governance and financial management to meet the standards of the Better Business Bureau's Standards for Charity Accountability; and**
- **Collect data from visitors to evaluate their current experience as a tool to support strategic planning related to optimizing visitor experience.**

As the newly established 501(c)(3) nonprofit management organization for Whitney Plantation, Whitney Institute is the applicant for these funds. Whitney Institute will manage the plantation, conduct research, collect and archive artifacts and become a premier center for knowledge about the history and legacy of slavery in Louisiana.

Established in 1752 by Ambroise Heidel as an indigo plantation, Whitney Plantation was purchased in 1999 by New Orleanians John and Donna Cummings, who undertook a painstaking restoration of the building and grounds. Their goal was to “flip the script” of traditional plantation tours that typically focus on historic owners and their wealth and possessions. Instead, **Whitney Plantation uses stories, records and artifacts of the enslaved people of the Whitney Plantation and the surrounding region to tell the stark and unsettling story of slavery. Moreover, it uncovers the largely untold and unknown truths of not only its horror, but also its influence on America's institutions, culture and history.**

Since opening to the public in 2014, Whitney has hosted 110,000 visitors.

Whitney Plantation honors the legacy of enslaved people and invites visitors to learn their stories through first-person narratives, original buildings, exhibits, and memorial spaces. As a site of memory, visitors reflect on the lives and experiences of enslaved people in memorial fields that record the names of individuals held in bondage in Louisiana. On guided tours, visitors view original buildings including slave cabins, a detached kitchen, and a 1790 Big House -- all through the eyes of the enslaved.

What need, problem, or challenge will your project address, and how was it identified?

The Whitney Plantation has grown at a lightning-fast pace since its opening -- far beyond expectations. From year one to year two, revenue roughly doubled -- from about \$680,000 in year one to \$1.3 million in year two. Importantly, this success has happened with a management staff of just three people, plus a dedicated group of highly trained tour guides and maintenance staff -- and **without** a strategic plan in place.

Because the Whitney Institute has been so busy with daily operations, scant attention has been given to creating a sustainable infrastructure for long-term management, governance and financial accountability. Visitor information has been captured somewhat anecdotally, through limited online and in-person surveys, sign-in sheets, and social media reviews and engagement.

At this pivotal moment, The Whitney Institute board and management understands that a professionally prepared strategic plan -- one that crystallizes mission, vision, goals, strengths, and challenges and opportunities; and sets a measurable action plan -- will be critical to sustaining growth and maximizing long-term sustainability and success. Without it, long-term success is a threatened. Even more fundamental is the need to establish basic nonprofit organizational policies and procedures that address board development and fiscal accountability -- necessities for any successful nonprofit organization. Finally, a formalized process for gathering visitor feedback data to be used as a planning tool will ensure the most educational and moving guest experience around a sensitive topic.

This is why we seek funding to contract with well-qualified museum and nonprofit experts to work with the management team to:

- **prepare a strategic plan,**
- **improve organizational capacity based on best practices, and**
- **incorporate the *Visitors Count!* data collection and analysis tool into the staff's everyday work.**

Over the next few years, Whitney envisions an ambitious menu of community and learner-centered programming. We want to collect and display artifacts, engage the community in educational programs, and reach national and international audiences with our research of slavery and the immediate post-slavery periods of Reconstruction and Jim Crow. We want to help tourists, local residents and schoolchildren alike to find at Whitney a deep and moving learning experience. Additionally, we want to **expand the management and staff capacity of the newly established non-profit Whitney Institute** to plan and manage both the Plantation itself and the related research and documentation work that will enrich the museum site's offerings.

Whitney plans to seek accreditation for The Whitney Plantation through the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) – a step that will fundamentally support the site's credibility, funding potential and long-term success. According to the Alliance's website, these two questions guide the accreditation process:

- *How well does the museum achieve its stated mission and goals?*
- *How well does the museum's performance meet standards and best practices as they are generally understood in the museum field, as appropriate to its circumstances?*

A strategic plan that addresses mission, vision and measurable action steps will lay a guide map for the work to be done to achieve accreditation.

Who or what will benefit from your project?

The Whitney Institute and the Whitney Plantation itself will benefit from a plan that ensures long-term viability and success. As noted above, even without a strategic plan in place, the site is attracting visitors and raising revenue beyond expectations. In addition, both the site itself and surrounding community

offer significant research and learning potential, capturing knowledge to be shared with scholars, community members and visitors alike. A strong strategic plan will put into place a solid foundation upon which to sustain and expand this success.

- **Whitney board, management and staff** will benefit by moving through the strategic planning and organizational development process, gaining insights about best practices for effectively managing the fast-moving growth and success of both the plantation site itself and the new Whitney Institute entity. Management and staff will work hand-in-hand with consultant professionals throughout the planning project to enhance the professionalism of the Whitney's operations.
- **Visitors** will benefit from a strategic plan that ensures a consistent highest-quality visual and informational learning experience, including the enrichment of the site's learning opportunities through new research and documentation avenues.
- **Researchers** will benefit from a plan that ensures that capacity and resources remain in place to explore the site's rich research potential.

How will your project advance your institution's strategic plan?

The project entails the development of a strategic plan, which is listed as an eligible activity under the Organizational Management Project category.

How will your project address the goals of the special initiative (as described above in Section A.1) and the Museums Empowered project category (Digital Technology; Diversity & Inclusion; Evaluation; Organizational Management)?

In terms of providing *professional development and capacity-building opportunities for museums* – the stated goal of the initiative – the staff and the organization will benefit from both the processes to create the plan and organizational structure as well as the resulting finished products. The lean three-person management team has already performed admirably, with revenue and visitor numbers well beyond expectations. A strong strategic plan will better prepare the staff of this new, fast-growing institution to work from a strong foundation, rather than mainly moving day-to-day from task to task, as is the case now.

Mapping out the plan and structure in coordination with outside experts will build capacity and expertise in a number of ways.

- The staff will benefit from working with someone to envision and create the “thirty-thousand-foot-level” view of what it will take to successfully and professionally manage and grow the museum over the long term.
- The staff will work closely with the planning expert to inform the plan, creating a better understanding of the plan and how to execute it, along with strong buy-in for long-term success. The staff will participate in at least nine trainings and workshops related to the strategic planning and organizational development processes.
- The plan itself will clearly detail the steps needed to sustain success and growth – and in doing so, clearly and concisely make the case for added capacity and resources (staff, training, financial) required to do the work.

A strategic plan will provide the framework for the “*sustainable organizational structures and strategies*”

for continued growth and vitality” that the Museums Empowered initiative cites as critical for a museum success. It will also serve as a foundational stepping-stone to achieving American Alliance of Museums accreditation, which will foster museum credibility, support and – ultimately – sustainability.

This application falls under the **Organizational Management** project category, which seeks applications that *“develop training and professional management, strategic thinking, embracing innovation, and managing change in order to foster continued growth, relevancy and vitality.”* As discussed above, participation in the strategic planning process itself will help the staff to learn, better understand and buy in to the work needed to accomplish the plan’s long-term goal – successfully managing fast-moving growth and change.

2. Project Work Plan

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

A. Strategic Planning Activities:

Consultant Turry M. Flucker, a museum administrator and former curator with extensive organizational and strategic planning experience, will work with Whitney staff on a participatory strategic planning process. Key activities will include:

- **Research and interviews** -- Mr. Flucker will first interview founders, staff and external stakeholders (such as those with similar organizations) to ensure full background and understanding of Whitney’s work and how it is perceived
- **Workshops** -- Girded with that background and perspective, Mr. Flucker will plan and conduct with Whitney management and staff an extensive menu of workshops designed to lay the groundwork for a strategic plan that aligns with American Alliance of Museums’ National Standards for Best Practices. Workshop topics will include:
 - **Workshop 1: Defining Slavery in the United States and Race in as a social construct in America.** With the understanding that Whitney is engaged daily in this language, this foundational exercise will ensure that every person engaged in the process has a clear and common understanding of these definitions going forward through the planning process.
 - **Workshop 2: Developing Vision and Mission.** This exercise will involve brainstorming, drafting and consensus-building around vision and mission statements.
 - **Workshop 3: Envisioning Strategic Partnerships.** This workshop will assist with thinking through and identifying strategic partners in the community, regionally, nationally and internationally. It will also help guide the thinking about who are those “out of the box” partners.
 - **Workshop 4: Shaping Organizational Structure.** This workshop will help management and staff to consider how to better structure the organization to ensure that The Whitney Institute “operates in a fiscally responsible manner that promotes its long-term sustainability,” as suggested by American Alliance of Museums. It will touch on AAM’s full range of standards.
 - **Workshop 5: Crafting Goals and Objectives, and Performance Measurements.** This workshop will craft actionable and attainable goals and objectives for The Whitney Institute. It will establish measures and benchmarks designed to lead toward accreditation and long-term organizational success.

- **Workshop 6: Establishing and Maintaining Best Museum Practices- Interpretation, Programming and Collections.** This workshop will cover several relevant AAM standards and best practices, including: collections care and stewardship, education and interpretation, and facilities and risk management.
- **Writing the Strategic Plan.** The research and workshops will reap the necessary information and insights to develop a full strategic The plan will articulate The Whitney Institute’s vision, mission, and values; sustainable goals, objectives and action steps; and a timetable for execution and implementation. It will document data and decisions gleaned through group meetings, working sessions, interviews and research. It will also factor in visitor feedback.

B. Organizational development activities:

Lisa Kaichen and Alicia Oliver of ResourceWorks LLC, an organization that has helped dozens of nonprofits build capacity over the past two decades, will work with both Whitney management/staff and the strategic planning consultant to provide coaching and technical assistance around organizational development. In addition to enhanced staff and management capacity, their finished products will include an orientation manual and governance policies and procedures, and templates for effective governance.

Key activities will proceed in order as follows:

- **Assess current operations** of the Whitney Institute as a start-up nonprofit entity based on standards of the *Better Business Bureau’s Standards for Charity Accountability*.
- **Provide training workshops** on: 1) Effective Nonprofit Boards, 2) Fund Development, and 3) Budgeting, Revenue Planning and Accountability.
- **Develop or provide templates** for effective governance, to include: 1) a conflict of interest policy and annual disclosure form, 2) role and responsibilities description for each board position and office, 3) board recruitment procedures, matrix and application materials, 4) sample agenda and minutes templates, 5) board orientation binder, 6) checklists for annual review of form 990, audited financial statement and management letter, 7) tailored committee structure and work plan for each board committee, 8) organizational effectiveness annual assessment tool to assess progress on measurable goals and objectives, 9) budget and revenue plan, and other tracking and reporting documents.

What are the risks to the project and are they accounted for in the work plan?

As with any ambitious “lean and mean” small-staffed start-up organization, there is always a risk of the staff being overtaken by daily work, without the time or energy to focus on big-picture long-range planning. As the consultant on organizational capacity, ResourceWorks is committed to working hand-in-hand with Whitney management to keep the planning projects on track.

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

Ashley Rogers, The Whitney Museum’s Director of Operations, is committed to taking responsibility for planning, implementation and management with the full support of the board of directors. As noted above, ResourceWorks stands ready to provide full support to keep the work on track.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

All strategic planning and organizational development activities noted above are listed in sequence. The strategic planning process will start in month one and take an estimated eight months to complete. The organizational development process will begin simultaneously with strategic planning and will likely end several months beyond strategic planning.

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

Personnel-wise, the project requires the time of Whitney's Director of Museum Operations (Ashley Rogers), and its Director of Research (Dr. Ibrahima Seck), the consultants (Turry Flucker and ResourceWorks, LLC). Other resources include the American Association for State and Local History's *Visitor Count!* research data collection system that will inform the strategic plan.

The Whitney Institute estimates that \$24,976 is needed to fund this work, and respectfully asks the IMLS Museums Empowered initiative for this much-needed support.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your intended results?

The key to success for these planning efforts will be to keep Whitney management and staff engaged while they continue their day-to-day work. The strategic planning and organizational development consultants plan to work together to facilitate the planning work, provide schedules and timelines, clarify activities and objectives, and offer assignments of responsibility. They will be in regular contact to help Whitney follow the timeline and track results. If needed, they will troubleshoot issues to head off delays.

How and with whom will you share your project's results?

The end products of this work are for the use and direct benefit of Whitney Institute management. While the successes of the museum will be shared far and wide, the plans and policies that guide that success are internal documents that will enhance the professionalism of the Institute. Whitney is happy to share with other institutions working through early growth processes.

Project Results

Referring to the Performance Goal(s) selected on the Program Information Sheet prepared for your application, choose one or more Performance Measure Statement(s) appropriate for your project and describe how you will collect and report the corresponding data.

Under the Performance Goal "train and develop museum and library professionals" the following two Performance Measure Statements are appropriate for this project:

- *My understanding has increased as a result of this program/training.*
- *I am confident I can apply what I learned in this program/training.*

After each of the strategic planning and organizational development trainings and workshops, participants will be surveyed about their understanding of and ability to apply what they learned. At the end of the respective overall strategic planning and organizational development processes, participants will be interviewed about what they gained and how they felt the process helped them. In the longer run, annual staff and management evaluations will be framed around achievement of specific strategic and organizational goals -- and thus become an assessment of staff's knowledge and ability to apply it. Finally, The Whitney Institute's success as measured per the strategic plan will itself indicate staff and

management's level of understanding and ability to apply learnings.

Referring to your Project Justification, describe your project's intended results that will address the need, problem, or challenge you have identified. These may be in addition to, but not instead of, the Performance Goal(s) and Performance Measure Statement(s) referenced above.

This process will enable The Whitney Institute to accomplish three goals:

- **Prepare a realistic, actionable strategic plan with measurable outcomes, and a continuous improvement plan based on the AAM standards for museum operations**
- **Develop policies, procedures and best practices in nonprofit governance and financial management to meet the standards of the Better Business Bureau's Standards for Charity Accountability**
- **Collect data from visitors to evaluate their current experience as a tool to support strategic planning related to optimizing visitor experience.**

In years to come, a strategic plan that addresses mission, vision and measurable action steps will lay a guide map for achieving **AAM** accreditation.

How will the knowledge, skills, behaviors, and/or attitudes of the intended audience change as a result of your project?

Whitney's management and board will have consensus and clarity regarding the priorities of the organization. Participation in the strategic planning process will build a deepened commitment to working together toward a common purpose. Finally, staff and management will enjoy the gratification of a job well done as implementation of the strategic and organizational plans leads to further organizational success.

What tangible products will result from your project?

The project will result in an actionable Five-Year Strategic Plan including measurable outcomes and a plan for ongoing development. The Organizational Development activities will result in a Board Orientation manual and written policies or templates for governance, finance and organizational effectiveness activities. *Visitors Count!* and the data collection system will result in a data-based analysis of guest experience, informing enriched experiences for future visitors.

How will you sustain the benefit(s) of your project?

Implementing the two main pieces of this project -- a thoughtful strategic plan and organizational best practices -- will together provide the type of solid foundation and direction required for any strong nonprofit organization to thrive. Solid planning and organizational practices will also improve The Whitney Institute's chances for grant funding to carry out its mission. Finally, The Whitney Institute will use the strategic plan as a roadmap to achieving AAM accreditation, itself a widely recognized and highly respected indicator of professionalism and use of best practices.

Schedule of Completion

December 2017	January 2018	February 2018	March 2018	April 2018	May 2018
Work Plan for Strategic Plan	Research/interviews	Research/interviews	Workshop: Defining Slavery	Workshop: Develop Vision and Mission	Workshops: Envisioning Strategic Partnerships and Shaping Organizational Structure
<div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #d9ead3; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> Visitors Count! Survey and Analysis, Implementation of KioskPro System February – June 2018 </div>					
Organizational Capacity Building Assessment of Current Governance Practices: By-laws, Board structure, policies, materials, etc.	Identification and Recruitment of Potential Board Members Development of board materials/binder	Board Orientation WORKSHOP: EFFECTIVE BOARDS	Review and Recommendation on of financial materials/policies Checklist for annual review and submission of 990 Creation of budget/revenue/financial report format	Review and Recommendations on Fund Development policies	Development of Committee Structure and Roles and Responsibilities
June 2018	July 2018	August 2018	Sept 2018	October 2018	November 2018
Workshop : Crafting Goals, Objectives and Performance Measures and Establishing and Maintaining Best Practices	Completed Strategic Plan				
	Development of work plans for each board committee	WORKSHOP: Budgeting, Revenue Planning, Accountability, Training on how to	Completion of all materials related to BBB standards for Charity Accountability	WORKSHOP: Fund Development	Training on turnkey use of an Organizational Assessment TI