



Museums for America

Sample Application MA-30-14-0246-14
Project Category: Collections Stewardship
Funding Level: \$25,001-\$150,000

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$102,500
Amount of cost share:	\$102,580

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Museums for America – Collections Stewardship Request: *Tapestries*

Abstract

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum requests funding to support the second phase of a tapestry conservation project that will result in the treatment and reinstallation of eight 16th-century Flemish tapestries that visually dominate the museum's Tapestry Room. The gallery has been identified as a highest priority of the museum's largest ever-capital preservation project, which includes both the construction of a new wing to relieve wear and tear on the museum's historic interiors, and the systematic preservation of Isabella Gardner's whole gallery installations. The Institute for Museum and Library Services funded phase one of this project, and this application seeks support to complete the second phase and accomplish the full conservation of the most significant works in this gallery.

Until 2012, the Tapestry Room hosted concerts and programs, with audience seating set up on a semi-permanent basis. When the museum's new wing opened in January 2012, all public programs were moved into the new space. The Tapestry Room has been reinstalled according to archival photos from 1915. Now, it is critical to ensure that the central works around which all elements of the gallery are installed are themselves treated. All eight of these tapestries are crucial to the Tapestry Room installation, and this phase of the project will ensure the completion of this work. The Gardner proposes to complete the whole gallery restoration by conserving eight tapestries in two phases: five episodes from *The Story of Cyrus* and three episodes from *The Story of Abraham*. Both series have hung on display since 1914, as per Isabella Gardner's will. Over the course of the last century, they have been regularly monitored. A condition survey conducted in 2003 revealed problems associated with missing backing supports and degraded hanging systems. Accumulations of particulate soils and numerous structural instabilities were also observed. With other conservation projects in the Tapestry Room nearing completion, treatment of the eight remaining tapestries in the gallery is the highest institutional priority, due to their condition and their importance for the complete restoration of the gallery.

The first phase of the project took place between July 2012 and July 2013 and was comprised of the treatment of four tapestries from *The Story of Cyrus* cycle, dated 1535-1550. Now, the Museum seeks support for completion of this project, comprising the treatment of three tapestries from *The Story of Abraham* and the final *Cyrus* tapestry. With all eight tapestries treated, the Tapestry Room restoration project will be complete. Several of the tapestries bear the Brussels' city mark and the weaver's marks of Jan der Moyen. The proposed treatment plan includes cleaning, structural stabilization, and the attachment of new backing support and hanging systems at the Royal Manufactures De Wit in Mechelen, Belgium, with oversight by the Gardner's Textile Conservator and in consultation with the Chief Conservator and Associate Curator of the Collection. The project also includes the introduction of a display rotation schedule and newly designed wall attachment systems as well as a new pulley attachment system to improve future handling of the tapestries.

Treatment will ensure the tapestries' long-term preservation by strengthening their structural integrity and mitigating the effects of gravity while improving their overall appearance. The aesthetic improvements will allow for the tapestries' stories and their impact within the room to be told with visual clarity. Treatment will be thoroughly documented in written reports and photographs, which will be accessible to staff and researchers. The project will continue to be shared with a broad spectrum of audiences, including school partners, museum teachers, online visitors, and the conservation community. The benefits of this project will be significant for every visitor to the Gardner Museum. The integrated and balanced appearance of the objects in the gallery fulfills Isabella Gardner's vision, which was for visitors to look at and consider the relationship among objects as she installed them, as much as at individual masterpieces. Ultimately, the successful conservation of the tapestries and the preservation of the Tapestry Room installation is an essential component of the museum's ongoing commitment to preserve and maintain the collection "for the education and enjoyment of the public forever."

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Museums for America – Collections Stewardship Request: *Tapestries*

Project Narrative

1. Project Justification

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum requests funding to support the second phase of a tapestry conservation project that will result in the treatment and reinstallation of eight of the ten 16th-century Flemish tapestries that visually dominate the museum's Tapestry Room. The preservation of Isabella Stewart Gardner's collection and gallery installations is of paramount importance to the museum. In 2007, after a multi-year strategic planning process, the Gardner launched its largest ever capital preservation project—including the construction of a new wing to relieve wear and tear on the museum's historic interiors by relocating core programs into purpose-built spaces. The Tapestry Room was identified as the highest priority for preservation as part of this capital campaign. The room has been reinstalled according to archival photos from Isabella Gardner's lifetime. With this proposal, the museum respectfully requests funding to support the final phase of this tapestry conservation project that will result in the conservation of these eight tapestries that are crucial to the interpretation of this gallery.

The Tapestry Room was created by Isabella Gardner in 1914, eleven years after the opening of the museum, in the tradition of a great tapestry hall. The 4,000-square foot gallery is named for two 16th-century Flemish tapestry series, *The Story of Cyrus* and *The Story of Abraham*, which originally hung in the Barberini Palace in Rome. The two series are the central works in the gallery, and the blending of the religious and the secular is reinforced by their interspersed arrangement, echoing the cultural and religious diversity of other objects in the room. In April 2012, the Gardner Museum received funding from IMLS to support the first phase of this tapestry conservation project, including treatment of four *Story of Cyrus* tapestries. The project dramatically transformed image clarity and allows viewers to see depth of perspective, and nuance of color and shape previously masked by soils and planar distortion for years. Content from public outreach about tapestry conservation measurably shifted the public's appreciation of the artworks because viewers could appreciate the tapestries' construction, and also better discern the colors, forms, and shapes necessary to visually read the pieces. Some public reactions cited on surveys distributed after events highlighting the project included: "*I found tapestries intriguing but slightly unsatisfactory, but now, I view them as marvelous works of art.*" When one respondent described her opinion of the tapestries in three words before and after the event, she stated "*living, breathing, and alive*" with prior perceptions as "*old, fixed, and static.*"

The *Story of Abraham* series, drawn from the Book of Genesis, is the sacred counterpart to the *Story of Cyrus* series; the contrast of these two storylines is an important component of Isabella Gardner's gallery installation. To fulfill the intention of the campaign that calls for complete restoration of the Tapestry Room, it is incumbent upon the museum to treat both series so that the original purpose of the installation – the blending of the religious and the secular "echoing the cultural and religious diversity of other objects in the room" – is realized. Whole gallery preservation has proven to work very well at the Gardner, where this approach has been accomplished already in four galleries. Because attention is devoted systematically to each individual object, no single object is inadvertently emphasized by appearing in a better state of preservation. The integrated appearance of the objects in the gallery fulfills Isabella Gardner's vision, which was for visitors to look at and consider the relationship among objects as she installed them, as much as at individual masterpieces.

History of the Tapestry Room: In her lifetime, Isabella Gardner used the Tapestry Room to stage both concerts and performances. Until 2010, the gallery hosted the museum's acclaimed weekly concert series, lectures, and symposia. Audience seating was installed on a semi-permanent basis, obscuring Gardner's intent of a grand hall in which the viewer can freely wander and examine the story cycles of the tapestries. The tapestries became a backdrop for public programming equipment and were exposed to particulate soiling and additional wear and tear. In 2000-01, the museum's conservation staff conducted a systematic survey of damage that resulted in a policy to reduce audience numbers, add stanchions, and widen aisles to minimize the impact of frequent and heavy use of the Tapestry Room. More significantly, the need for a new performance space, which was first identified in the museum's planning process, was confirmed and became a top preservation priority in the museum's new wing.

When the museum's new wing opened in January 2012, all concerts, lectures, and public programs were moved into a new performance hall and the Tapestry Room was reinstalled according to archival photos of 1915, the year after the gallery opened to the public. IMLS funding supported the conservation of a group of side chairs upholstered in 18th-century painted and gilt leather. A French medieval painted stone fireplace at the south end of the gallery, with a royal coat with *fleurs de lys*, has also been conserved along with *The Archangel Michael* by Père Garcia Benabarre, which hangs above the fireplace mantle. For the first time in 85 years, visitors have an unobstructed view of the tapestries. The transformation of the Tapestry Room back to the gallery that Isabella Gardner designed has allowed the museum to interpret the historic significance of a tapestry hall in the Late Gothic period. The conservation of the two series will not only prolong the tapestries' lifetimes, but will enable the museum to convey their cultural use, and their context in relation to the rest of Isabella Gardner's collection.

Tapestry Description and Conditions: The Gardner proposes to complete the whole gallery restoration of the Tapestry Room by conserving eight tapestries in two phases: five episodes from *The Story of Cyrus*, drawn from the text Herodotus' *History* (*four completed to date and funded by IMLS*), and three episodes from *The Story of Abraham*, drawn from the Book of Genesis. The series both bear the Brussels' city mark; several of the tapestries also bear the weaver's marks of Jan der Moyen and Jan van Tieghem, two important tapestry weavers of the day. The five wool and silk *Story of Cyrus* tapestries are dated 1535-1550. They were purchased with *Story of Abraham* series in 1905-06. They include:

- *King Astyages Commands Harpagos to Take the Infant Cyrus*, T19w2, 4.19 x 6.01m
Brussels' city mark and Jan der Moyen's weaver's mark
- *A Messenger from Harpagos Brings Cyrus a Letter*, T19e4, 4.24 x 4.57m
No city mark and unidentified weaver's mark
- *King Astyages Places Harpagos in Command of his Army*, T19w18, 4.26 x 4.65m (*phase two request*)
Brussels' city mark and Jan der Moyen's weaver's mark
- *Queen Tomyris Receives Cyrus' Proposal of Marriage*, T19e57, 4.32 x 4.73m
No city or weaver's mark
- *Queen Tomyris Learns Her Son Has Been Taken Captive*, T19e36, 4.01 x 4.61m
Brussels' city mark and Jan der Moyen's mark

The three wool and silk *Story of Abraham* tapestries for which we seek conservation funding to complete this project are dated 1550-1600 and include:

- *Abimelech Restores Sarah to Abraham*, T19w56, 3.46 x 3.96m
- *Abraham Dismisses Hagar and Ishmael*, T19w26, 3.43 x 2.67m
- *Abraham Receives Rebecca*, T19n21, 3.46 x 5.41m

Both tapestry series have hung on display since 1914, as per Isabella Gardner's will. Over the course of the last century, they have been regularly monitored. They were cleaned in the 1930s and 1960s, and stabilized in the 1970s and 1980s to mitigate the effects of long-term display. The introduction of a museum-wide climate control system in the 1990s further benefitted the highly hydroscopic tapestries. One Abraham tapestry, *Abraham's Servant Presents Jewels and Raiment to Rebecca*, was affected by a roof leak and subsequently underwent further cleaning and stabilization from 1994-1997. The leak was successfully addressed and the tapestry returned to the gallery. A condition survey conducted in conjunction with surface cleaning between 2003 and 2005 revealed problems associated with missing backing supports and degraded hanging systems. Accumulations of particulate soils and numerous structural instabilities were also observed. One tapestry, *Rebecca Gives Water to Abraham's Servant*, was identified as an urgently high priority and in-house treatment is underway with plans for reinstallation by spring 2014. With this and other conservation projects in the Tapestry Room completed, treatment of the four remaining tapestries in the gallery is the highest institutional conservation priority, due to their condition and their importance for interpretation. This designation is reflected in the attached Conservation Long Range Plan, whose priorities are

established and regularly reviewed by the conservation department with input from museum curators, and approved annually by the Collection Conservation Committee.

History of Conservation at the Gardner: The new wing, which opened in January 2012, includes new conservation labs offering a significant improvement over the previous work space both in available space and facilities. The Gardner Museum is proud of its conservation history, which is documented as far back as the 1920s. Detailed inventories record the restoration of individual objects and maintenance of the museum building. The Boston area, with its concentration of art museums including the Museum of Fine Arts, the Fogg, the Worcester Art Museum, and the Gardner, provided a fertile laboratory for research and collaboration in the emerging field of art conservation both before and after World War II. Notable among Gardner's early conservators was George L. Stout, whose seminal research into artists' materials and agents of degradation earned him the distinction of one of the founders of modern scientific conservation. Stout was selected as the Gardner Museum's second director (1955-1970), and in this capacity definitively established the commitment of the museum's governance to the preservation of the collection in perpetuity, according to Isabella Gardner's will. Perhaps at no other art museum has the importance of conservation been so early and consistently embraced as a core of the institution's mission. Today, conservation remains integral to all programs at the museum. Collection condition and environmental surveys conducted in the 1980s and 90s prioritized the needs of the collection and guided the work, policies, and staffing structure of the conservation department. IMLS generously funded two detailed condition and environmental surveys in 1987 and in 1988, which formed the basis for an \$8 million climate control project completed in 1996, the major component of the Gardner Museum's first-ever capital campaign. A 1995 collections survey, also underwritten by IMLS, identified conservation needs for works on paper, textiles, furniture, and paintings. As a result, in 1997 the museum embarked on an Accelerated Care of Tapestries project (ACT), which addressed the conservation of 13 tapestries in urgent need of repair. Four of the 13 tapestries conserved as part of the ACT project were generously supported by IMLS. The Gardner conservation department has also received a major multi-year grant from a private foundation for the study and treatment of nineteenth-century paintings and polychromed Italian terracotta sculpture, and is the recent recipient of a challenge grant from another private foundation to endow the position of Chief Conservator.

Impact and Results: All of the tapestries exhibit similar conditions typical of long-term display in a heavily trafficked area: accumulation of soot and other soiling (resulting from when the building was once heated by coal and wood), which introduce harmful substances that damage fibers and diminish legibility of the imagery; structural instabilities of weakened and/or broken yarns that compromise the overall strength of the cloth; and, the effects of gravitational pull compounded by inadequate support backing and failing hanging systems. Treatment will ensure the tapestries' long-term preservation by strengthening their structural integrity and mitigating the effects of gravity while improving their overall appearance. A new pulley attachment system will improve future handling of the tapestries by reducing direct handling by fewer staff members. The aesthetic improvements will allow for the tapestries' stories and their impact within the room to be told with visual clarity. The museum's goal is also to improve public understanding of how these tapestries were created, and encourage greater appreciation of tapestries as a work of art for museum visitors, members, and students from partner schools. The benefits of this project will be significant for every visitor to the Gardner Museum because the institutional goal is to restore the Tapestry Room to Isabella Gardner's vision. During Phase One, the opening of the newly refurbished Tapestry Room in January 2012 provided visitors with an expanded opportunity to explore the breadth of Isabella Gardner's collection. Trained museum teachers highlighted the tapestry collection in their tours in ways that previously were not possible. Using information elicited by staff from visitors, the museum's textile and education departments collaboratively developed a multi-day workshop for museum teachers focused on the history, production, and conservation of tapestries. The workshop has strengthened museum teachers' general understanding of tapestries so they can facilitate discussions with visitors about this important aspect of Isabella Gardner's collection. The project was also shared with more than 2,500 Boston Public Schools students and community organization after-school programs via the museum's *School and Community Partnership Program*. Museum educators designed a series of

classroom and museum visits around the tapestries' subjects and conservation needs; the project was also featured in a television segment on WGBH's *Greater Boston* program for the general public.

During the second phase of this project, the museum will highlight the importance of completing the conservation of the central works in this gallery and continue including this content in museum tours and the *School and Community Partnership Program*. In addition, programming will focus on tapestries' relevance today, a new focus, by inviting contemporary tapestry artists to host workshops in the education studio in the new wing. Filmed interviews with these artists and their connection to historic tapestries will be featured on the museum's website. The museum will share the project with a broad spectrum of audiences by building on previous programming that featured the history, production, and conservation of tapestries. The Gardner will seek to partner with other area museums, such as the American Textile History Museum in Lowell, MA and the Museum of Science, in order to advocate tapestries' relevance in today's world. Programming around the project will potentially focus on connecting historical weaving technologies with today's textile industry by linking the past and the present through exploration of the evolution of the loom. This programming could help visitors understand how technologically advanced the art of tapestry weaving was in the past, how these techniques were used in 19th century Massachusetts (when the Gardner Museum was created), and how the methods are applied today.

2. Project Work Plan

The proposed treatment plan includes cleaning, structural stabilization, and the attachment of new backing support and hanging systems. The project also includes the introduction of a display rotation schedule and newly designed wall attachment systems. The following treatment methods, outlined in the order they will be preformed, are critical to the tapestries' long-term preservation. The methods achieve three key objectives of the project:

1. Aesthetic improvement by soil reduction and re-establishing planarity;
2. Mitigation of the effects of gravity by strengthening weakness in the cloth, adding support backing and new Velcro hanging systems, and introducing a rotation schedule; and,
3. Reduction of future handling by a newly designed wall attachment system.

The Gardner's tapestries will be cleaned, stabilized, and backed at the Royal Manufactures De Wit in Mechelen, Belgium, the company that successfully handled treatment of the first four tapestries funded by IMLS. Their techniques focus on minimal intervention and object safety. Traditional wet cleaning methods of submerging the tapestries in a series of surfactant/rinse baths pose risks, such as hydrolysis of weak fibers, dye loss, and overall dimensional change. A new aerosol/suction cleaning system developed at De Wit has been effective in significantly reducing the risks that traditional wet-cleaning poses. The suction cleaning system introduces a detergent-charged aerosol steam through the tapestry. This system has been employed with successful results by the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and The Art Institute of Chicago. Assessment of the first phase of the project revealed that the method succeeded in achieving intended outcomes, and that continuing with this mode of treatment for the final four tapestries is the optimal approach. In addition to cleaning, there are structural instabilities in the tapestries that must be treated, such as re-stitching inherent slits and reinforcing deteriorated wool and silk fibers. There are thousands of slits throughout the weave structure at color and design changes that are situated in the horizontal orientation when the tapestry is hung. Traditionally, these slits were stitched closed. Over time the stitching becomes weak and eventually ineffective resulting in loss of both image clarity and overall structural strength. The tapestries are woven in wool and silk. Silk is more susceptible to the affects of long-term display. After years of exposure to sunlight and soot from a nearby fireplace, the silk areas in many of the tapestries are weak; exhibiting thinning of the yarn structure or complete loss of yarns. The overall strength of the whole cloth is compromised by weakened silk areas. Stabilization of these weak areas is necessary before new backing and hanging systems are attached.

Support Backing System and Rotation Schedule: A new support backing system will be attached to the tapestries in order to support the objects while hanging and to reduce direct gravitational pull on the aged fibers.

Prior to this project, neither the Abraham nor the Cyrus series had a backing system, so the tapestries remaining to be treated are currently supporting their own weight. The current Velcro hanging system, installed in the 1980s, is ideal in that it evenly distributes the weight across the top edge. Unfortunately, the system was constructed with a jute header, which is actively degrading and becoming ineffective. It is imperative that the current system is replaced before complete failure occurs. Following conservation at De Wit, a display rotation schedule will be introduced in order to prolong the life of all eight tapestries by limiting the amount of vertical display exposure. Current thinking posits that for every 15 years of display a tapestry would be off-view or at rest for 5 years. Initial logistics and gallery appearance drafts have been written. A new pulley wall attachment system will be designed and in place when the tapestries are re-hung. This system will reduce handling and staff time during rotation, and would also provide a quick and simple way to remove the tapestries from the wall in the event of an emergency.

Project Timeline: The four tapestries to be conserved in Phase Two (for which IMLS funding is being sought) are *Abimelech Restores Sarah to Abraham* (T19w56), *Abraham Dismisses Hagar and Ishmael* (T19w26) and *Abraham Receives Rebecca* (T19n21) and *King Astyages Places Arpagos in Command of his Army* (T19w18). Treatment will take place between November 2014 and October 2015 at the Royal Manufactures De Wit in Mechelen, Belgium, with oversight by the Gardner's Textile Conservator and in consultation with the Chief Conservator and Associate Curator of the Collection. The project will begin with Gardner Museum staff preparing two of the tapestries at a time for shipment. The first two tapestries will be sent to De Wit in November 2014. When the second set is shipped over in April 2015, the first two will be sent on the return trip, thus reducing staff time, consultation visits, and courier costs. The museum devised this method of dovetailing travel, which reduces transport and shipping costs, during Phase One and are applying the cost savings to the current budget. Shortly after their return, the tapestries will be reinstalled in the gallery on the new pulley system. Activities outlined in the attached Schedule of Completion have been designed to ensure that the majority of tapestries remain on view. The schedule takes into account internal projects, such as special exhibitions, to avoid conflicts of staff time. The project will have minimal impact on the textile conservation's lab schedule since the majority of treatment will take place at De Wit.

Project Resources: Key project staff includes Tess Fredette, Textile Conservator at the Gardner, who will act as the project manager and will oversee the selection of techniques and materials used at De Wit. She will be responsible for preparing the tapestries for shipment, the attachment of new Velcro systems after their return, and overseeing their reinstallation. She will also be principal in the design of the rotation plan and in the development of public programming. A textile conservator with a special expertise in tapestry conservation, Ms. Fredette has worked at the Gardner Museum since 2003. Prior to this, she was a conservator at the Textile Conservation Center in Lowell, MA for eight years. She holds a BFA in fiber arts from the Massachusetts College of Art and a MS in textiles from the University of Rhode Island. Other Gardner personnel involved in the project are Gianfranco Pocobene, Chief Conservator; Peggy Burchenal, Curator of Education; Amanda Ricker, Registrar; Anne-Marie Eze, Associate Curator of the Collection; and David Kalan, Preparator. Mr. Pocobene, a paintings conservator, joined the Gardner Museum in 2004. He will provide oversight and consultation throughout the project. Ms. Burchenal, a nationally-recognized arts educator who has been at the Gardner since 2000, will work closely with the project manager and education staff to develop, plan and implement education and community programming. Dr. Eze will provide project oversight and consulting on aesthetic decisions. Ms. Ricker, the Gardner's Registrar, is charged with overall collections, records and risk management for the physical collection. She will coordinate all paperwork related to travel (including insurance and shipping and receiving documents) and will serve as liaison with the fine arts shipper Masterpiece International. Mr. Kalan, Preparator, will advise and assist Ms. Fredette on various aspects of the project, including deinstallation, reinstallation, packing, and the design and implementation of the new pulley system. Mr. Kalan has been the preparator at the Gardner since January 2009. Prior to his present position, Mr. Kalan spent 14 years as a preparator at the Harvard Art Museums.

Consultants: Founded in 1889, the Royal Manufactures De Wit is a leading innovator in tapestry conservation and has extensive experience with some of the world's most valuable tapestries. Yvan Maes has been Managing Director

of Royal manufacturers De Wit since 1979 and was trained as a master weaver and restorer by his grandfather, Gaspard De Wit. He will oversee all aspects of the conservation treatment at De Wit. The Gardner staff has worked closely with Mr. Maes in the treatment design and schedule, and will continue to work closely with Mr. Maes throughout the project. Consultations will take place by phone, email, and at site visits to De Wit that will coincide with courier trips. The museum will also partner with Masterpiece International and Fine Arts Enterprises (FAE) for crating, transport purposes, and assistance with deinstallation and reinstallation of the tapestries. Masterpiece International is a premier fine art shipper and custom broker that the Gardner has utilized for more than a decade when collections have traveled internationally. FAE is a leading provider of fine art services in the Boston area and has worked extensively with the Gardner Museum on many projects.

Budget: The total budget for phase two of the project is \$205,080. The museum requests a grant of \$102,500 over one year to be allocated for the direct expenses of the conservation treatment provided by De Wit (representing 35% of total project costs), crating and installation assistance by Fine Arts Enterprises, and a portion of shipping and courier services by Masterpiece International. The Gardner will support the project with a match of \$102,580, including costs for personnel, courier, transport, supplies, and the majority of shipping and courier service by Masterpiece International. These funds will come from the museum's operating and capital budgets.

Evaluation and Documentation: The Gardner Museum is using the time between phases to review the differences in image clarity and the handling of the tapestries made possible by the new pulley system. In November 2013, a gallery discussion with museum teachers took place to review the project and compare tapestries that have not recently been treated with those treated during Phase One; teachers will in turn talk to visitors about the differences. On January 25, 2014 Tess Fredette will present a lecture to the Tapestry Weavers in New England about the project. The Gardner will conduct a rigorous evaluation of Phase Two of this project, encompassing the following methods: formal written pre- and post-treatment summaries of each tapestry by Ms. Fredette; treatment summaries for each tapestry compiled by Gardner Museum conservation staff after the works are reinstalled in the gallery; and a comprehensive written final report by De Wit including the results of the treatment on all four tapestries. Pre- and post-treatment photography of all tapestries will be conducted, including photography during treatment in Belgium. A filmmaker was contracted during Phase One and filmed the tapestries pre- and post-treatment, deinstallation, and reinstallation on the new pulley system as well as photographs of the cleaning process. This documentation will be edited and shared during Phase Two and will provide a clear measure of improved collection handling. Before and after treatment photography will clearly demonstrate the effectiveness of the treatment, including the benefits of soil removal, stabilization, and addition of backing support system. The completion of this project will be featured on the museum's website through an article, followed by the completion of an edited video about the entire tapestry restoration project that includes footage from the treatment of tapestries from the first phase of the project. Eleven tapestries in the collection, including three conserved in Phase One of this project, are currently featured on the museum's new website, which was underwritten in part by IMLS. The exploratory site invites online visitors to virtually visit the Tapestry Room and view the arrangement of works of art, read related curatorial content, and listen to audio of the stories depicted on the tapestries excerpted from Herodotus's *Life of Cyrus the Great*. Images of the newly treated tapestries will be added to the website, including content explaining the conservation process to give visitors an even fuller understanding of the Gardner and its collection. As with all major conservation initiatives at the Gardner, staff expects to share results of the project with the conservation community through publication and/or presentation at professional conferences.

3. Project Results

Through this project, the Gardner Museum seeks to continue to shift visitors' understanding and perception about these tapestry works from previous perceptions of the works as static and difficult to read, to the perception that they are vibrant and alive with meaning. This outcome has been proven as achievable during the first phase of the project, and the museum's goal is to accomplish this result for the remaining tapestries. This project is designed to bring out image clarity and thereby illuminate their content, shape and forms in greater precision than was ever

before possible. The benefits of this project are expected to be significant for every visitor to the Gardner Museum because one of the most important institutional goals of the museum during the construction of our new wing is to restore the Tapestry Room to Isabella Gardner's vision. For the first time since it opened in 1914, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum's Tapestry Room has once again taken its place among the nation's preeminent grand tapestry halls. The restoration has returned this beloved space to its original configuration for the first time since a temporary stage, chairs, and other modern elements were added to accommodate formal concerts in the early 1970s. The Gardner Museum thanks IMLS for making it possible to conserve the first four tapestries to their former definition of shape and line, and clarity of imagery. The final stage of this project will ensure that the entire Tapestry Room is conserved completely and that interpretation will focus equally on both the secular and the sacred tapestry series, as originally intended. Treatment ensures the tapestries' long-term preservation by strengthening their structural integrity and mitigating the effects of gravity while improving their overall appearance. The aesthetic improvements allow the tapestries' stories and their impact in the room to be told clearly. The new pulley attachment system will improve future handling by reducing direct handling and by requiring fewer staff members.

Products and Measurement of Success: The treatment will be thoroughly documented in written reports and photographs which will be accessible to staff and researchers, as well as an edited film that will be available for the general public on the museum website, featuring the conservation of the tapestries. The project's success will be measured by level of improvement in visual clarity through before and after photography; reduction in handling of tapestries by conservation staff as documented by filming of de- and reinstallation using the new pulley system; changes in attitude by general visitors and members toward tapestries as works of art and as relevant objects to today's textile industry as measured by surveys for members and visitors; and number of programs and school visits that include the tapestries' conservation in their curriculum at the museum.

Sustainability: Finalization of a tapestry rotation plan for the entire tapestry collection, including the four tapestries proposed for treatment in this phase of the project, is reaching completion. The tapestry rotation plan will soon be presented to the Gardner Museum's Collection Conservation Committee in spring of 2014, and subsequently to the Board of Directors for final approval. This rotation schedule and new pulley wall hanging system will ensure conservation of all tapestries at the Gardner will be completed with minimal impact for years to come, allowing for the tapestries to be off view for appropriate intervals thus extending their life. The effectiveness of the treatment will be reevaluated every five years during scheduled surface cleaning of the entire tapestry collection, as part of ongoing thorough assessment conducted by the Museum's conservation department.

Treatment of the first four tapestries has already transformed how museum teachers communicate to the public, students from partner schools, and constituents from our *School and Community Partnership Program*. This content has been added to the Gardner Museum's ongoing training for museum teachers, so that all future visitors will benefit from this project. This fusing of project results into regular museum education for all audiences ensures that the public will continue to benefit from its results and from the insight that it offers into tapestry construction, conservation, and ongoing care for many years to come. The museum also plans to compile, research and publish the conservation history of the *Cyrus* series, in particular, which will include this project, and research on this project is underway.

Ultimately, the successful conservation of the tapestries and the preservation of the Tapestry Room installation is an essential component of the museum's ongoing commitment to preserve and maintain the collection "for the education and enjoyment of the public forever," as dictated by Isabella Stewart Gardner and as a core component of the museum's mission.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum
Museums for America – Collections Stewardship Request: Tapestries

Schedule of Completion

Activity	Nov-14	Dec-14	Jan-15	Feb-15	Mar-15	April-15	May-15	June-15	July-15	Aug-15	Sept-15	Oct-15
Deinstall T19w18 & T19w56, remove Velcro and lining systems, pack and ship to DeWit												
Conserve T19w18 & T19w56 (<i>treatment at De Wit</i>)												
Attach new wall hanging mechanisms for T19w18 & T19w56												
Deinstall T19n21 & T19w26, remove Velcro and lining systems, pack and ship to DeWit												
Return and install T19w18 & T19w56												
Conserve T19n21 & T19w26 (<i>treatment at De Wit</i>)												
Attach new wall hanging mechanisms for T19n21 & T19w26												
Return and Install T19n21 & T19w26												
Wrap up, report writing												