



Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

**Sample Application MH-00-15-0016-15
Funding Level:\$25,001-\$150,000**

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$111,850
Amount of cost share:	\$116,462

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Abstract
- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

Please note that the instructions for preparing narratives for FY2016 applications differ from those that guided the preparation of FY2014 and FY2015 applications. Most obviously, the names of the three narrative sections and the order in which they appear have changed. Be sure to use the narrative instructions in the FY2016 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

Upgrading Technology to Preserve the BCRI Visitor Experience
2014 Proposal to the Institute of Museum and Library Services
Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

ABSTRACT

The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute (BCRI) in Birmingham, Alabama submits this request for support of upgrades to technology throughout the BCRI permanent exhibition. Organized in six thematic galleries, the permanent exhibition occupies 26,200 square feet of space and presents a compelling journey through one of America's most critical eras. The exhibition tells the story of segregation and of the heroic struggle of "ordinary" citizens whose dedication, commitment, and sacrifices changed our nation and continue to have a positive impact on the world. Viewed by over 160,000 visitors annually, the experience is designed around technology that was once state-of-the-art but has now become obsolete. BCRI, therefore, requests support to upgrade technology throughout its permanent exhibition to assure that it can continue to serve its visitors in the manner in which the exhibition is fully intended to be experienced – as a multimedia journey.

The proposed project will ensure continuation of the visual and audio experiences intended for BCRI's permanent exhibition galleries by supporting removal of outdated technology and installation of current technology including LED/LCD monitors, digital video players and projectors, a short throw projector, control system re-programming, and equipment repair and maintenance. Information Technology Administrator Michael Holland will lead the Technology Upgrade project working with a team that includes David Davis, Building Superintendent; Wayne Coleman, Head of Archives and Technology; Ahmad Ward, Head of Education and Exhibitions; and Laura Anderson, Archivist and Oral History Project Director. In consultation with Wayne Coleman, Holland will oversee implementation, identify and contract with vendors, and conduct much of the physical work of the project.

All technology upgrades will be completed by in-house staff and vendors working under contract and supervised by staff. Vendors include Brad Larson Media (StoryKiosks), Terry Goldberg (Computer Reprogramming), B & H Professional's Source (equipment vendor), L- Tron Direct (vendor for LCD monitors) and Synergy Global Technology, Inc. (RackmountMart.com-LCD monitors and modified cabinetry).

The goal of this project is to assure that BCRI will continue to deliver the visitor experience that has gained it an international reputation. Project objectives include:

OBJECTIVE 1: Technology upgrades throughout the BCRI permanent exhibition will ensure full support of the multimedia BCRI visitor experience.

OBJECTIVE 2: Technology upgrades will reduce the number of days that monitors or other equipment is not functioning due to repair or maintenance requirements.

OBJECTIVE 3. Technology upgrades will increase visitor use of interactive components of the BCRI Human Rights Gallery.

Weekly planning meetings will assure that project progress or problems are communicated internally. Media announcements and proposals for presentations at professional conferences will be used to disseminate project results to the public and museum colleagues. Surveys will be used to determine the project's impact on the visitor experience. The benefits of the technology upgrade will be sustained by regular maintenance and replacement of equipment as needed with funding from the operating budget. Because such routine maintenance costs will be incurred incrementally, it will be possible to absorb them as part of the regular budget, sustaining the benefits of the technology upgrade project.



Upgrading Technology to Preserve the BCRI Visitor Experience

1. Project Justification

- Institutional Background

BCRI is a museum, a place of research, a teaching facility and an acknowledged learning center for people of all ages and backgrounds. BCRI was chartered as a private, non-profit Alabama corporation in February, 1990. Since opening in 1992, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute has served more than 2 million people from all 50 states and all over the world, including adults, school children, students, researchers and scholars. BCRI now serves an average of 160,000 people each year through tours, on-site programs and off-site presentations. BCRI's widely acclaimed permanent exhibition is the foundation for all of these activities. By capturing and interpreting the story of the American Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century through the unique lens of Birmingham, the permanent exhibition provides an informative and inspiring visitor experience. This content provides the framework for BCRI's programs and interpretation that focuses on applying the lessons of the Birmingham movement to contemporary human rights issues.

Organized in six thematic galleries, the permanent exhibition tells the story of segregation and the heroic struggle of "ordinary" citizens whose dedication, commitment, and sacrifice changed the nation and continue to impact the world. BCRI exhibition technology, however (which was "state-of-the-art" when it was installed over 22 years ago) is now obsolete. BCRI's Information Technology Administrator has managed to maintain the system operations, video programs, and other computer-driven experiences by scouring e-Bay to find replacement parts for equipment that is no longer manufactured. While this approach has kept the exhibitions more or less running for over a decade, it is not a sustainable approach. **The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, therefore, requests support to upgrade technology in its permanent exhibition to assure that it can continue to serve its visitors in the matter in which the exhibition is fully intended to be experienced – as a multimedia journey.**

- Project Description

The BCRI Permanent Exhibition occupies 26,200 square feet of space, presenting a compelling journey through one of America's most critical eras. The galleries tell the heroic story of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, of how ordinary people overcame centuries-old bigotry and racism. The proposed project will ensure continuation of the visual and audio experiences intended for these galleries by supporting removal of outdated technology and installation of current technology including LED/LCD monitors, digital video players and projectors, a short throw projector, control system re-programming, and equipment repair and maintenance.

The BCRI visitor experience begins with a 12-minute film depicting the founding of Birmingham in 1871 to its evolution as the crown jewel of southern industrialism. The intersection of railroad lines and the natural resources to make iron and steel attracted major investment by corporations such as Tennessee Coal and Iron Company and U.S. Steel, resulting in astounding growth of the city for the five decades from 1871 to 1921, earning Birmingham its nickname, "The Magic City." Visitors then move through six distinctive galleries.

- Barriers Gallery conveys the inequity of life for Blacks and Whites under segregation from the 1920s up to 1964.
- Confrontation Gallery inserts the visitor into the brewing racial conflict as visitors walk through haunting life-size images on plexiglass with the voices of adults and children, both Black and White, sharing comments that they would only make behind closed doors.
- Movement Gallery takes the visitor through the history of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement from 1954-1963. Major movement events come to life with first-person accounts from participants and dramatic media presentations in four mini-theatres - “Bus Ride to Freedom,” “Give Us the Vote,” “Birmingham: The World is Watching,” and “The March.”
- Milestones Gallery highlights events from 1963 through 1992 and features life-size figures “walking to freedom” near a window view of Kelly Ingram Park, site of the demonstrations in the 1960s.
- Human Rights Gallery links the struggle for equality in Birmingham to movements for human rights throughout the world.
- Richard Arrington, Jr. Resource Gallery is a computerized interactive learning center with computer stations that feature video clips from the BCRI Oral History Project.

In 2009, BCRI unveiled the first major renovation of the permanent exhibition. The *Expanding the Legacy* renovation project included changes to about 40% of the galleries. A major component was expanding exhibitions to include events in Birmingham since 1963, including the election and administration of Birmingham’s first African-American mayor and evidence used in the final disposition of criminal cases related to the bombing of Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. One of the most exciting and inviting changes resulting from the renovation is the new Human Rights Gallery which features interactive, multi-media stations, displays on selected international human rights movements, an interactive display featuring protest music from human rights struggles globally, and an opportunities for visitors to reflect and share their own stories as well as opinions about current issues.

While the original exhibitions included extensive use of multi-media, upgrades to aging equipment were not included in the 2009 renovation project budget. Therefore, staff continues to have to search for parts that are no longer manufactured and conduct patchwork repairs as old equipment breaks down. This project will support specific technical upgrades to equipment throughout the entire BCRI permanent exhibition visitor experience.

The evolution of digital high definition video has made much of the equipment originally installed – and, in many cases, still in use-- at BCRI obsolete. Digital Video Projectors will be installed throughout the permanent exhibition. Finding bulbs and replacement parts for projectors that were purchased in 2000-2002 is also becoming increasingly difficult. In addition, new projectors on the market have brighter illumination thereby the promise of improving picture quality and the visitor experience. The current Video Players (Altec Soloist) are no longer manufactured or serviced. For the last six years, the IT Administrator has repaired them by purchasing surplus projectors on e-Bay from sellers who were replacing equipment elsewhere with more up-to-date equipment. The availability has thus continued to shrink. One of the most popular displays at BCRI is a video at the end of the tour that features artist Denny Dent creating a painting of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that hangs beside the television screen. This CRT monitor with a built-in video recorder will be replaced with an LCD screen and digital video player. Installation of the new video projectors and video players will require an update in the code and re-programming of the Crestron control operating system that runs this equipment.

Major upgrades are needed in the Movement Gallery. “Birmingham: The World is Watching” presents a display of six vintage television sets running 1960s era news clips and commercials interspersed with oral

history interviews with movement participants. This content runs on CRT television monitors which are no longer manufactured. Replacing this obsolete equipment with LCD monitors will preserve the content and improve the quality of this valuable video resource. The “Give Us the Vote” mini-theatre features a video wall with 12 separate CRT video screens. A re-mastered video and installation of LCD monitors will be used to upgrade this evocative video experience interpreting the long struggle for voting rights in Alabama and throughout the United States.

The Human Rights Gallery was completely renovated in 2009 with a design intended to engage younger visitors with interactive multimedia stations including “The Front Line,” a multi-screen introductory video; “What’s Your Story?,” a video recording station where visitors are invited to share their own stories of discrimination; “Shout It Out,” a listening station offering music from global struggles; “Taking A Stand,” an oversize video screen featuring contemporary human rights issues; and “Where Do You Stand?,” a computer station where visitors share their viewpoints about current issues. The technology updates will include a Short Throw Projector that will improve focus and brightness for the “Taking a Stand” screen. As anticipated, the “Leave Your Story” section has experienced substantial wear and tear over the past five years. This technology upgrade will replace current monitors and computers and upgrade the operating code for this area.

This project also includes the cost of replacement bulbs for the video projectors as well as anticipated costs to contract with outside vendors to repair broken items and replace failed equipment.

As a result of this project, BCRI will continue to deliver the visitor experience that has gained it an international reputation. In July 2005, BCRI received full accreditation from the American Association of Museums, a distinction earned by only 5% of the nation's 17,000 museums. In 2007, BCRI was named an Affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution. For two consecutive years, BCRI received national awards at the White House: in 2007, a Coming Up Taller Award for its innovative after-school program and in 2008, the National Medal for Museum Service presented by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. BCRI is promoted by the City of Birmingham and the State of Alabama as a major cultural heritage site and was recognized as the 2007 Attraction of the Year by the Alabama Department of Tourism. Between 2012 and 2014 the BCRI permanent exhibition was featured on Swiss, Japanese, and U.S. television, profiled in a *New York Times* article, and included in the National Geographic Book, “100 Places That Can Change Your Child’s Life: From Your Back Yard to the Ends of the Earth.”

2. Project Work Plan

Information Technology Administrator Michael Holland will lead the Technology Upgrade project working with a team that includes David Davis, Building Superintendent; Wayne Coleman, Head of Archives and Technology; Ahmad Ward, Head of Education and Exhibitions; and Laura Anderson, Archivist and Oral History Project Director. In consultation with Wayne Coleman, Holland will oversee implementation, identify and contract with vendors, and conduct much of the physical work of the technology upgrade project. The BCRI staff planning team (Michael Holland, Wayne Coleman, David Davis, Ahmad Ward, and Laura Anderson) will hold planning meetings for Permanent Exhibition upgrades, conduct meetings with local equipment vendors, and carry out evaluation of the project, including surveys of visitors to determine the impact of the technology upgrade on the visitor experience. Michael Holland will place all orders for equipment and will receive and inspect all delivered upgrade equipment. Priscilla Hancock Cooper, interim president and CEO, will monitor completion of the project. Weekly planning meetings will assure that project progress or problems are communicated internally. Media announcements and proposals for presentations at professional conferences will be used to disseminate project results to the public and museum colleagues.

- Key Project Staff

Michael Holland, Information Technology Administrator was on the crew that installed the original exhibitions and technology when BCRI opened in 1992. Since then, he has worked continuously with BCRI, managing all computer, internet, hardware, and software functions and activities including installation of the Richard Arrington, Jr. Resource Gallery computer bank/network and the 2009 permanent exhibition renovation technologies. Holland operates, maintains, installs, and repairs computer and audiovisual equipment for the exhibitions and for staff members' offices. He also monitors and recommends improvements in computer systems, negotiates with vendors, and provides cost estimates for capital expenditures.

Wayne Coleman, Head of Archives and Technology will handle all purchasing of technology and equipment for BCRI, where he has worked since 1995. Responsible for the archival components of the permanent exhibition, Coleman was instrumental in development and installation of the Richard Arrington, Jr. Resource Gallery and continues to supervise technology initiatives. A certified archivist, Coleman completed the Getty Museum Leadership Institute.

David Davis, Building and Grounds Superintendent will coordinate contract maintenance workers and work with other vendors involved in any physical alteration/installation/carpentry related to the physical plant. Davis has more than 30 years' experience in facilities management and maintenance. A certified plumbing, heating, and air conditioning specialist, Davis has been with BCRI since 1993. He has primary responsibility for all equipment in the facility, and works closely with Michael Holland on upkeep and installation of technology and audio-visual equipment.

Ahmad Ward, Head of Education and Exhibitions will serve on the planning team for the Technology Upgrade project. Responsible for education and public programs as well as care for portions of the permanent exhibition, Ward is a graduate of the Getty Next Generation Leadership Institute and the Southeastern Museums Conference Jekyll Island Museum Management Institute (JIMI). He also supervises volunteers and group tours and will oversee the evaluation process.

Laura Anderson, Archivist and Oral History Project Administrator will serve on the planning team for the Technology Upgrade project. A certified archivist and member of the BCRI management team, she is a graduate of the Getty NextGen program, JIMI, and the Seminar for Historical Administration. She was part of the planning team for the 2009 renovation, providing key leadership for renovation of the Human Rights Gallery.

- Key Vendors

Brad Larson Media will install StoryKiosks equipment and software, a computer platform that uses a cloud-based system for reviewing and sharing stories through social media.

Terry Goldberg, Computer Consultant will reprogram and update the operating system software code used to run all exhibits in the Permanent Exhibition.

B & H -- The Professional's Source is the vendor from whom BCRI will purchase various equipment: LCD monitors, digital video players, video projectors, bulbs for video projectors and equipment mounting hardware.

L- Tron Direct is the vendor from whom BCRI will purchase LCD monitors.

Synergy Global Technology, Inc. (RackmountMart.com) is the vendor from whom BCRI will purchase LCD monitors and modified cabinetry for LCD monitors.

All technology upgrades will be completed by in-house staff and vendors working under contract with staff using the following phased-in process:

Phase I:

- Construct cabinetry for StoryKiosks computers (Mike Holland);
- Install StoryKiosks computers (Brad Larson Media);
- Install short throw projector (Mike Holland, David Davis)

Phase II:

- Modify TV cabinets in Children’s March gallery (Mike Holland);
- Install monitors in TV store cabinets and placed in TV store gallery (Mike Holland, David Davis);
- Begin installation of video projectors in various galleries (Mike Holland, David Davis);
- Complete installation of video projectors in galleries (Mike Holland, David Davis);
- Begin replacement of video wall monitors and MLK monitor (Mike Holland, David Davis);
- Complete replacement of video wall monitors (Mike Holland, David Davis)

Phase III:

- Install all digital video players (Mike Holland, David Davis);
- Complete control system software reprogramming (Terry Goldberg);
- Final testing of equipment and reprogrammed system software (Wayne Coleman, Ahmad Ward, Laura Anderson, Mike Holland, David Davis, Terry Goldberg);
- Conduct evaluations and surveys on the impact of upgraded equipment on the visitor experience (Wayne Coleman, Ahmad Ward, Laura Anderson, Mike Holland, David Davis, Terry Goldberg)

3. Project Results

PROJECT GOAL: Upgrades to technology in the permanent exhibition will assure that BCRI continues to provide visitors an exceptional, multimedia visitor experience.

OBJECTIVE 1: Technology upgrades throughout the BCRI permanent exhibition will ensure full support of the multimedia BCRI visitor experience.

Outcome: Visitors to BCRI will have a positive response to the technical quality of the permanent exhibition.

Performance measure: At least 75% of visitors will indicate a positive response on post-visit surveys.

OBJECTIVE 2: Technology upgrades will reduce the number of days that monitors or other equipment is not functioning due to repair or maintenance requirements.

Outcome: Visitors to the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute will not be limited in their ability to experience the exhibition fully because equipment is not operating properly.

Performance measure: The number of days that equipment is not working will be reduced by more than 50% from the current average of ____ per year to less than ____ based on reports from the I.T. Administrator.

OBJECTIVE 3. Technology upgrades will increase visitor use of interactive components of the BCRI Human Rights Gallery.

Outcome. More visitors will submit videos in the “What’s Your Story?” studio and comments on “Where Do You Stand?” monitors.

Performance measure: During the year after the upgrades are completed, there will be a 25% increase in the number of videos and comments submitted by visitors in comparison with the previous year.

Sustainability: The benefits of the technology upgrade will be sustained by regular maintenance and replacement of equipment as needed with funding from the operating budget. Because such routine maintenance costs will be incurred incrementally, it will be possible to absorb them as part of the regular budget, sustaining the benefits of the technology upgrade project.

Schedule of Completion for BCRI Permanent Exhibition Upgrades

Month / Year	Task	Staff Person (s)
October-December 2015	Conduct planning meetings for Permanent Exhibition upgrades; conduct meetings with local equipment vendors	Wayne Coleman, Mike Holland, Ahmad Ward, Laura Anderson, David Davis
January 2016	Place orders for upgrade equipment	Mike Holland
February-March 2016	Receive upgrade equipment; Begin Phase I of installation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have cabinetry for StoryKiosks computers constructed; • install StoryKiosks computers (Brad Larson Media); • install short throw projector 	Brad Larson Media, Mike Holland, David Davis
April-May 2016	Begin Phase II of installation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have TV store cabinets modified; • install monitors in TV store cabinets and placed in TV store gallery; • begin installation of video projectors in various galleries 	Mike Holland, David Davis
May- June 2016	Complete installation of video projectors in galleries; begin replacement of video wall monitors and MLK monitor	Mike Holland, David Davis
June-July 2016	Complete replacement of video wall monitors; Begin Phase III of installation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • install all digital video players; • have control system reprogramming for system software completed 	Mike Holland, David Davis, Terry Goldberg
August-September 2016	Complete final testing of equipment and reprogrammed system software; conduct evaluations and surveys on the impact of upgraded equipment on the visitor experience	Wayne Coleman, Ahmad Ward, Laura Anderson, Mike Holland, David Davis, Terry Goldberg