



Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

**Sample Application MH-00-15-0038-15
Funding Level: \$5,000-\$25,000**

National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African American Culture Alabama State University

Amount awarded by IMLS: \$25,000

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.

Abstract

Exhibition Plans for the Nat King Cole House Museum

The National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University (National Center) will develop an exhibit design plan and acquire use-rights for content that will compose a permanent, interactive multimedia exhibit to be placed in the Nat King Cole House Museum. The turn of the century Nat King Cole House Museum is located on the campus of Alabama State University, and was established to celebrate the life of this internationally acclaimed entertainer, jazz pianist, singer, song writer, and actor. Cole was the first African-American to host a nationally televised variety show, and he used his celebrity to challenge racial discrimination during his career.

The project will facilitate an interactive, self-guided exhibit situated in the house museum that will teach and interpret the life, career and legacy of Nat King Cole to visitors. The need for this interactive exhibit was identified in consultation with museum specialists, historians, architects, tourism professionals and community partners including the Nat King Cole Society of Montgomery.

There are several activities associated with this project. The activities include issuing a request for proposals (RFP) to select an exhibit firm to develop the Nat King Cole House museum exhibit design plan. The Project Team will then select an exhibit firm to prepare the exhibit plan. The Project Team will also assemble an Exhibition Plan Focus Group. The selected exhibit firm will then conduct a site visit to the Nat King Cole House and take recommendations from the Exhibition Plan Focus Group. The Project Team, in conjunction with the firm, will then create a second focus group for the intended audience that will review the proposal and answer a pre and post survey to determine if the plan meets the project's learning goals incorporated into the exhibition design. The exhibition plan will be vetted by the Project Team to insure that all input is reflected in the final plan. Based on the agreed upon exhibit design plan after its review, the Project Team will then contact rights authorities to secure use of the music, images and videos for the project. These selected resources will then be acquired. The Project team will then accept the final exhibition plan for future implementation.

The project will begin on September 1, 2015, with the issuance of an RFP, and will end on August 31, 2016, with the finalization of the exhibit plan and the acquisition of use-rights for the content. The Nat King Cole House Museum is slated for a formal opening on March 17, 2017, the birth date of Nat King Cole after completion of the grant period and the implementation of the plan.

Through the promotion of this House Museum as a tourism destination, this exhibit would allow the National Center and the city of Montgomery to significantly expand the tourism market. The Nat King Cole House will benefit local, national and international visitors who visit Montgomery as a tourism destination and are interested in popular American music, history and culture. This is particularly important because the top five tourist sites in Montgomery are history related museums, with a house museum atop the list as the number one visited site.

The project will also reach and teach students, faculty and staff throughout the region, and will be aggressively marketed to the University's large student, alumni, and community. The exhibit will also allow the National Center to expand its partnership with Alabama State University's nationally acclaimed Visual and Performing Arts Department, and with the nearby nationally ranked Booker T. Washington Magnet High School, which has an emphasis on visual and performing arts.

The Project Team will create Exhibition Plan Focus Groups that will include university personnel, community stakeholders, tourism officials, and students to provide input for the exhibit design plan. The Intended Audience Focus Group, which will include, university personnel, students at various educational levels and community representatives, will be surveyed to ensure the plan meets predetermined benchmarks and speaks to the intended project performance goals.

Once the exhibits are designed and installed in the Nat King Cole House museum, visitors to the museum will leave more informed and engaged about the history of Nat King Cole, particularly his work in civil rights. This museum will preserve the legacy of Nat King Cole in American history and culture.

Exhibition Plan for the Nat King Cole House Museum

1. Project Justification

What do you propose to do?

The National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture at Alabama State University (National Center) is applying for funds from IMLS to:

- (1) Contract with a consultant to develop an exhibit design plan for a permanent, interactive multimedia exhibit for a turn of the century house museum established to celebrate the life of world famous entertainer, Nat King Cole,
- (2) Secure use rights for 25 images related to Nat King Cole held by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,
- (3) Secure use rights for Nat King Cole TV shows being donated to ASU by the Nat King Cole Estate (Cole hosted 47 total episodes on NBC between 1956-57), and
- (4) Secure use rights for music from Nat King Cole albums that have been donated to ASU by a local Montgomery donor.

The house is located on the campus of Alabama State University in Montgomery, Alabama. Cole was born in this house on March 17, 1919. The house was originally part of the historic Belaire community adjacent to the campus. ASU purchased and restored the house as a museum to Nat King Cole. This museum will honor an African-American who became an internationally acclaimed jazz pianist, singer, song writer, and actor. (Please see additional background information in the addendum) As the first African-American to host a nationally televised variety show, Cole broke long standing barriers. The museum will also honor Cole for using his celebrity to challenge racial discrimination during his career. The museum exhibit will highlight the famed singer's family, his career, and the Belaire community in Montgomery, Alabama where he was born. The museum exhibit will also celebrate other nationally recognized musicians contemporary with Nat King Cole who have an Alabama connection, such as Erskine Hawkins and the jazz band known as the Bama State Collegians. The exhibit design plan will incorporate digital images, music and videos with current furnishings in the museum such as an original bronze sculpture of Nat King Cole completed for the museum by renowned artist, the late Tina Allen. The multimedia components of the exhibit would be encapsulated in TV monitors from the period Nat King Cole performed and hosted his variety show. The Nat King Cole museum is a prominent feature of ASU's cultural district which also includes:

- the former home of alumnus, Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, who made outstanding contributions to the struggle for African American civil rights;
- the Montgomery Interpretive Center for the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March;

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

Although the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights at ASU has led the effort to complete the first phase of interpretation and furnishings in the Nat King Cole House museum, it needs an interactive, self-guided exhibit in the house that will teach and interpret the life, career and legacy of Nat King Cole to visitors. The need for this interactive exhibit was identified in consultation with museum specialists, historians, architects, tourism professionals and community partners including the Nat King Cole Society, a local group that has advocated for the preservation of the house as a museum to honor Nat King Cole's life and legacy. The major challenges that the exhibit will address are:

- Highlighting how Nat King Cole used his celebrity to advance civil and human rights.
- Encouraging academic collaboration at ASU by promoting scholarly research and interest in Nat King Cole.
- Using multimedia exhibits to expand the traditional interpretation of a house museum that would engage a digitally connected audience.

Exhibition Plan for the Nat King Cole House Museum

- Promoting this unique museum, the only place in the nation interpreting the life, career and contributions of Nat King Cole.

Who or what will benefit from your project?

The project will reach and teach students, faculty and staff at all educational levels. In addition, the museum will benefit the local, national and international visitors interested in popular American music, history, and culture who visit Montgomery as a tourism destination. The Nat King Cole House museum will serve a diverse audience in the following ways:

- It will provide the National Center an opportunity to teach audiences about Cole's family, particularly his early life, and how the injustices of segregation provided a platform for his advocacy for civil and human rights.
- As a native of Alabama, Nat King Cole's legacy will draw attention to the state's rich musical tradition. Tourism is the second largest industry in the state of Alabama. Montgomery receives approximately 1,453,508 tourists annually. This exhibit will allow the National Center and Montgomery to significantly expand its tourism market through the promotion of this place as a tourism destination. In Montgomery, the top five tourist sites are history related museums, with a house museum atop the list as the number one site.
- The exhibit will provide the National Center with an engaging, educational tool for K-12 students. The Montgomery public schools include more than 31,000 students and 3,940 employees who may benefit from the Nat King Cole interactive exhibits. The students make up just a fraction of the students across the state that would visit the museum. The exhibit would allow ASU to expand its partnership between the University's nationally acclaimed Visual and Performing Arts Department and the nearby, nationally ranked Booker T. Washington Magnet High School which has an emphasis on visual and performing arts.
- A primary audience for the interactive exhibits will be ASU's students, faculty and staff. However, the museum will allow ASU additional opportunities for networking and collaborating with other local colleges and universities in the area on related activities and programs. In addition to ASU, Montgomery is home to eleven other major colleges and universities, including Air University at Maxwell Air Force Base which brings to the city United States Air Force students based throughout the nation and internationally.

What are the performance goals and intended results of your project?

- To educate visitors about information not widely known about Nat King Cole, particularly the risks he took in using his celebrity to challenge social injustice and racial discrimination. An outgrowth of the work will be housing, preserving and making available to the public archival collections related to Nat King Cole.
- To create an interactive multimedia exhibit plan that will engage and inform visitors about the pioneering entertainment career of Nat King Cole.
- To feature multimedia devices to show segments of the Nat King Cole variety show, allow the visitor to hear Nat King Cole's music, and provide digital access to audio-visual materials related to Cole's life and work. The digital components of the exhibit will provide an experience to visitors and students who previously would not have had access to these original and historic resources.
- To create an interactive, multimedia digital exhibit plan that will help visitors understand the dynamics of the turn-of-the-century segregated middle-class neighborhood where Cole was born.
- To create an interactive, multimedia digital exhibit plan that will expose visitors to the rich and varied musical tradition in Montgomery that influenced entertainers throughout the nation during the first quarter of the twentieth century.

How will your project enhance the capacity of your institution?

Exhibition Plan for the Nat King Cole House Museum

- This grant would provide the funding needed to complete the final interpretive phase for the museum. ASU has a “Furnishing Evaluation” for the house and the University has acquired several pieces of furnishings along with copies of Cole’s music albums. An interactive, digital exhibit would allow the National Center to significantly improve the visitor experiences and minimize staffing through the use of self-guided tours once the house is open to the public.

2. Project Work Plan

What specific activities will you carry out?

- Send out Request for Proposals (RFP) to select an exhibit firm to develop the Nat King Cole House museum exhibit design plan
- Select a design firm to prepare the exhibit plan based on University selection policies and procedures
- Conduct a site visit to the Nat King Cole House with the selected design
- Set up an Exhibition Plan Focus group who will work with the project team to provide input into the design of the exhibit plan
- Firm presents draft plan for evaluation to project team and Exhibition Plan Focus Group
- Set up Intended Audience Focus Group for pre and post survey of exhibition learning objectives
- Firm gathers all evaluation results to finalize the plan
- Final plan is submitted
- Contact rights management offices to obtain appropriate rights to use the music, images and videos for the finalized plan
- Select and purchase the music, images and videos from the library and company catalogues that support the plan

Who will plan, implement, and manage your project?

- The project management consists of the Dean of the Levi Watkins Learning Center and Library who is also the Project Director for the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African American culture. The project team will also include historians, the University’s Archivist, the Cultural Heritage Manager as well as other staff from the National Center and the University Archives, and representatives from the Nat King Cole Society. This team would work very closely with the marketing and communication staff of the University in planning, implementing and promoting the project along with assistance from other University departments and staff. The project team will be the entity that manages the exhibit as it manages the house museum.

When and in what sequence will your activities occur?

- RFP for exhibit design plan - September 1, 2015 – October 31, 2015
- Select firm and conduct onsite visit before November 30, 2015
- Set up an Exhibition Plan Focus Group by December 31, 2015
- Firm will develop plan with input from the project team and Exhibition Plan Focus Group January-March 2016
- Set up Intended Audience Focus Group by January 30, 2016
- Firm presents draft plan to project team in April 2016
- Project team evaluates the plan May-June 2016
- Project team acquires rights for multimedia June-July 2016
- Plan and activities are finalized by August 2016

What financial, personnel, and other resources will you need to carry out the activities? *Note: You must include \$2,000 per year in grant funds for travel to attend IMLS-designated meetings.*

- The amount budgeted in the grant for the use rights of the TV shows and the music is only an estimate. Additional funds may be needed to secure rights for the TV shows and music to be used in subsequent phases of the exhibit. Once the house is ready for public tours, the project team will work with

Exhibition Plan for the Nat King Cole House Museum

additional personnel on campus to help market, promote and publicize the tours of the museum locally, statewide and nationally. The project team will apply for additional funding from the State Tourism Department to develop brochures to distribute regarding the tours. The project team will also work with University officials to promote the site on the University's website and via the University's social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

What resources will your institution contribute to the project? (Note that for applications at the \$5,000-\$25,000 funding level, all project expenses should appear in the IMLS column of the budget since cost share is not permitted.)

- Alabama State University will contribute the time and expertise of the project manager and project team as well as other related faculty and staff toward the development of the project. At the same time that this project is being executed, the project team will work to fundraise for the fabrication and installation of the exhibit. Once the exhibits are installed, tours of the house can be fully implemented. The project team will develop a tour schedule complete with a staffing plan. The University will also continue to maintain the historic structure and acquire period furnishings/ artifacts/ collections related to Nat King Cole.

How will you evaluate your project?

- As part of the exhibit design, the project team will create a focus group that will include University officials, community stakeholders and students to provide input for the design plan that will incorporate exhibit elements to inform and engage the intended audience. The project team will survey the focus group for input into the design plan to ensure it meets the intended performance goals. The plan will be vetted with the project team and a follow-up survey administered to measure the level of satisfaction with the plan. If the survey responses meet the predetermined benchmarks, the plan will be finalized. If the plan does not meet the predetermined benchmarks, the project team will use the survey responses of the focus group to make any needed adjustments of the museum exhibit plan before it is finalized and rights are secured for related images, videos and music.

How will you track your progress toward achieving your performance goals and intended results?

- The project team will hold weekly planning meetings with the exhibit design firm as well as quarterly meetings with University officials and community stakeholders to review and provide feedback on the design of the exhibits to assess outcomes to ensure that the project goals are accomplished and timetables are being met.

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

- The results from the project's evaluations will be shared with all members of the project team, University officials and other appropriate faculty, staff and students and with community stakeholders particularly the Nat King Cole Society. The project results will be shared with these individuals in monthly or quarterly meetings.

3. Project Results

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

- Once the exhibits are designed and installed in the Nat King Cole House museum, visitors to the museum will leave more informed and engaged about the history of Nat King Cole, particularly his work in civil rights. One of the primary goals of the exhibit is for the visitor to learn how one person made a difference and how their being more altruistic can also make a difference. The goal of the museum and exhibit is not just to promote Nat King Cole as an entertainer, but to also encourage individuals to learn from Cole's story of growing up in humble surroundings to have an international impact in the world through his music and civil rights advocacy. We want visitors to develop an

Exhibition Plan for the Nat King Cole House Museum

appreciation for the challenges Cole faced to become the first black entertainer to have a nationally televised show and be inspired to use their creativity or activism for good.

What performance indicators will you use to measure this change?

- The project team will administer a pre and post survey to the Intended Audience Focus Group. This survey will determine whether the knowledge, skills, behaviors and/or attitudes of the intended audience have changed as a result of the project. The results of the post survey will be submitted to the design firm for incorporation into the final exhibit design plan.

What are the proposed targets for these performance indicators?

- The target is to have multimedia, interactive components incorporated into an exhibit design plan that informs and engages the audience about the life, work and legacy of Nat King Cole by end of the grant project year.
- The post survey of the Intended Audience Focus Group will provide an 85% favorable response that the exhibit design plan meets the intended goals.

How will you compare the proposed targets to actual outcomes?

- If we are successful at finalizing the exhibit design plan after it has been successfully vetted against the goals, an exhibit design plan will be completed that can be implemented.

What tangible products will result from your project?

- The tangible products that will result from this project are reproductive rights to a number of never-before-seen images related to Nat King Cole's life, family and career, copies of and reproductive rights to Nat King Cole's nationally televised show from the 1950s, rights to use songs from Nat King Cole music albums, and a multimedia exhibit design for the Nat King Cole House.

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

- Through an ongoing capital campaign, the National Center has raised approximately 20% of the funding needed for the fabrication of the exhibit design plan which is outside the fundable activities of this grant. The National Center has identified Nat King Cole enthusiasts for fundraising support to complete the fabrication phase of the project. We will continue the capital campaign through the grant period with an intended formal opening of the Nat King Cole House Museum on March 17, 2017. The National Center will work with the Nat King Cole Society, Inc. to host events at the house.
- The Nat King Cole House is situated in the heart of Alabama State University's Cultural District. The cultural district includes the Abernathy home, the Levi Watkins Learning Center, and the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail Interpretive Center which will be constructed in 2015. The Interpretive Center will be operated by the National Park Service to tell the Montgomery story of the 1965 Voting Rights March. Other components of Alabama State University's Cultural District include the historic President's home as well as the National Center for the Study of Civil Rights and African-American Culture. The National Center host visitors from around the world who visit the campus to learn the story of the modern civil rights movement and Montgomery's part in it.
- The project team will work with city tourism officials to integrate the house museum as part of the city's tourism promotion. The City of Montgomery is home to numerous Civil Rights related museums including the Rosa Parks Museum, the Dexter Avenue King Memorial Baptist Church and parsonage museum where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. preached and his family lived, the Freedom Rides Museum and the Civil Rights Memorial and Museum operated by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The City of Montgomery is also home to the Hank Williams Museum and the Nat King Cole House museum would help bolster Montgomery's music legacy.
- Throughout the state of Alabama, there is a robust music tourism market with the Alabama Music Hall of Fame as well as the Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area which includes the Muscle Shoals Sound Studio, Fame Studio and the home of W.C. Handy. The Nat King Cole House Museum would be an addition to these statewide musical cultural sites.

Schedule of Completion

Exhibition Plan for the Nat King Cole House Museum

	September 2015	October 2015	November 2015	December 2015	January 2016	February 2016	March 2016	April 2016	May 2016	June 2016	July 2016	August 2016
Request For Proposals (RFP) for Exhibit Design												
Select firm and Conduct onsite visit												
Set up exhibition plan focus group												
Firm develops plan with project team and Exhibition plan focus group												
Setup intended audience focus group												
Firm presents draft plan												
Project team evaluates plan												
Project team acquires rights for multimedia												
Plan and activities finalized												